

Last Respects: Exploring the Place of Funerals in a Rural South African Community

Vanessa Nicolai

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ABSTRACT

Last Respects: Exploring the Place of Funerals in a Rural South African Community

Vanessa Nicolai

The dramatic rise in AIDS-related deaths in South Africa in recent years is making funerals a prominent part of the cultural and economic landscape. In rural communities such as Hamburg, in the Eastern Cape, they tend to cost at least five times the monthly income of the entire household. Based on seven months of fieldwork, this thesis explores how funerals are conducted in Hamburg, as well as many people's ambivalence about the seemingly necessary expense involved. Funerals are found to be a site of tension tied to gender, inter-generational relations and material inequalities. They also reveal the extent to which HIV/AIDS is still taboo. At the same time, they perform an important cohesive role, helping to keep the community together in the face of difficult realities. Using the twinned cultural norms of 'helping each other' and 'building the homestead,' the thesis examines the ways in which funerals are materially and symbolically engaged in a complex choreography that both contains and explores the potentially disruptive aspects of the present. Finally, it is shown how local practices and understandings related to funerals speak to broader issues in the building of a new South Africa.

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my cousin Alexandra Susan Mayne.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: WHY FUNERALS? WHY SOUTH AFRICA?

Yesterday morning I went with my research assistant, Liberty, to visit funeral parlours in the town of Peddie, about 40 minutes from Hamburg. I felt some trepidation approaching the first one, advertising itself simply as "Funeral Services and Supplies," with a colourful LoveLife¹ billboard next to it. We soon found ourselves in an unfamiliar world of coffins, caskets and headstones. It was unnerving to be surrounded by the accoutrements of death, to read breezy ads like "Affordable funerals, excellent services. Contact us 24 hrs." There was a poignancy to the cellophane bags of plastic flowers, the glossed coffins with white satin interiors . . . ways to make for a decent end. On our way to the next parlour I took a photo of a bar named Satisfaction, after a Coke ad painted on the wall. When we walked past, I noticed shadowy figures inside, drinking and playing pool. One of the parlour employees told us that a man was recently stabbed at Satisfaction and that his body was just left there on the floor while people continued to enjoy their evening. She said violence accounts as much for the death of young adults in South Africa as AIDS. Liberty took it all in stride, but I'm sure he was wondering why on earth I had decided on this, of all research topics.

It wasn't my intention to study funerals in Hamburg, a rural community in the predominantly Xhosa-speaking Eastern Cape province of South Africa. My original plan had been to investigate whether women's economic empowerment was bringing about substantive changes to gender roles that might be increasing their susceptibility to violence and HIV infection². In 2004, I had visited Hamburg with family members who have a holiday home there, and had discovered the Keiskamma Art Project, founded by Dr. Carol Hofmeyr in 2000 (The Keiskamma Trust 2007). Since its inception, the project has become enormously successful, currently employing some one hundred women in the community who make crafts such as bags, aprons, quilts, beadwork jewellery and

¹ LoveLife is a slick, youth-targeted HIV prevention campaign.

² South Africa has one of the worst HIV/AIDS epidemics in the world. The estimated prevalence for people aged 15–49 in 2006 was 18.34%, which equates to approximately 5.41 million people living with HIV, including 257,000 children (UNAIDS 2006 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic 2006:17).

cushion covers, as well as embroidered art works, which have won national and international acclaim³. The Art Project is part of a local non-profit organization called The Keiskamma Trust, which manages a variety of community programs, notably the Keiskamma AIDS Treatment Program, created in 2004 to provide care and HAART (highly active antiretroviral therapy) at a time when the government roll-out of life-saving ARV (antiretroviral) drugs had not yet reached hospitals serving rural areas.⁴ On my return to Canada, I contacted Carol by e-mail and broached the idea of my doing fieldwork in Hamburg. She sent a warm and welcoming reply, so I began to structure a research proposal using her projects as my guide.

I had several reasons for wanting to conduct fieldwork in South Africa, the country of my birth. My family had emigrated in 1979, when I was eleven. I had returned periodically for short visits, but was especially keen to experience South Africa in its new configurations since the transition to democracy in 1994. I sensed that out of the cultural, economic and racial divides that were the legacy of a history of brutal dispossession and exploitation, new spaces for discovery and healing were opening up. I was tantalized by the possibilities anthropological fieldwork held out for learning about the realities that lie behind media reports, statistics, and popular stereotypes and, most importantly, for shared knowledge and understanding. So, in spite of the country's disturbing crime statistics

³ The Keiskamma Tapestry (2004), modeled on the French Bayeux Tapestry, recounts the history of the Eastern Cape. The Keiskamma Altarpiece (2005), inspired by the 16th-century Isenheim Altarpiece was unveiled at the Grahamstown National Arts Festival in 2005, and has since toured nationally and abroad. In August 2006, it was displayed at the St James Cathedral in Toronto, at the same time as the International AIDS Conference (August 13–18, 2006) (The Keiskamma Art Project 2007).

⁴ Operating an outreach program of volunteer health workers to identify people in need of care and to help monitor compliance with ARV regimens, this program has started over 300 patients from Hamburg and villages in the surrounding area on ARV therapy since 2005 (The Keiskamma AIDS Treatment Program 2007).

(Louw 2007), reinforced by the dire warnings of family members living there, I returned to the place that was once home, but had now become quite foreign to me.

A few weeks after my return to Hamburg in late June 2005, I was driving along the 16-km stretch of rocky gravel road that leads from the R72 highway to the village, when I got caught in a long train of cars and vans, inching their way along. Eventually, they turned off at one of the forks, and began wending their way up the hill to the 'location'⁵. I wondered what the occasion was. The sight of such processions was to become sadly familiar. There seemed to be a funeral every other week in Hamburg and its neighbouring villages; they came up regularly in conversation and were clearly a major social event.

I got my first glimpse of the reality behind the funerals when Carol had invited me to accompany her on one of her rounds in Peddie South⁶. On the days she wasn't working in one of the three primary care clinics she was assigned to, she would drive her *bakkie* (pick-up van) for miles around the entire district, fetching desperately ill patients to start ARV treatment at the care centre in Hamburg. On this particular day, we drove for about an hour to the first village where we were directed to the house of a patient. Carol went in and soon emerged with a young woman and an emaciated older man, who was clinging to both of them for support. We made him as comfortable as possible and went on to fetch a young woman who similarly struggled to walk, her breathing laboured, skin pulled taut across her cheekbones, eyes listless. By mid-day, the back of van was packed with patients and health volunteers. One of the latter, who, for most of the ride,

⁵ This was the word used by both black and white people in Hamburg to refer to the part of the village up the hill where only Xhosa families live. It was also referred to as 'the village.' In the apartheid era, the term was used to refer to townships for non-whites.

⁶ Hamburg falls within an area formerly known as Peddie District, which is now part of Ngqushwa Municipality (see Chapter Three).

had been carrying on an animated conversation with her friend as the weak woman's head bumped against her shoulder, turned to tell me about her life in the village, her daughter, and her work as a health volunteer. She soon confided that she was positive. She looked the picture of good health.

A few weeks later, I was conducting my first interview with Nolumanyano⁷, a forceful woman in her early fifties. As per my original research plan, I was following my interview guide on household income and expenditures. She told me she paid close to R100⁸ (CAN\$20) per month (about 4% of her monthly household income) for two funeral insurance plans for her and her daughters. I asked what the plans covered and she explained that the first (an informal, locally managed one) paid out about R2,600 (\$520) for drinks and groceries. The other more formal plan from a funeral parlour in Peddie covered the cost of the coffin, tent, and more groceries (about R5,000, or \$1,000). For the 'full service' (lowering device, mats, stands and hearse), the family would have to pay an extra R550 (\$110) to the funeral parlour. She then recounted that when her mother had passed away, she and her sisters had wanted to offer her more than what the insurance policies covered, so they pooled their resources and splurged on a casket, a tombstone, and a video-recording. In all, the event cost about R22,000 (\$4,400), which was close to eight times Nolumanyano's gross monthly household income. When I asked why they had spent so much, she said:

We had the feeling, "Let us do a nice thing, a big thing," because we thought it was a thanksgiving to her, because she did a lot for us, she brought us up. So we were happy to have her. We miss her, so let us do something special for her. It doesn't matter if she doesn't see it, let us do it.

⁷ To protect confidentiality, all interviewees' names in this thesis are pseudonyms.

⁸ At the time of my fieldwork, the exchange rate was approximately R5 (Rand) to CAN\$1. All dollar amounts indicated are Canadian dollars.

After this interview, I pondered the astronomical costs of this funeral in relation to what I knew of Nolumanyano's past economic hardships and still relatively insecure position. Her explanation offered an insight, but I wanted to know more.

I soon learned that the manner of conducting funerals in Hamburg had undergone dramatic transformations in just a couple of generations. From being a relatively simple affair, where the body was buried within three days in a locally-made wooden coffin, and visitors were served black tea, *inkobe* (boiled corn kernels) and plain fire-baked bread called *rostili*, they had become increasingly elaborate, drawn-out events, attended by hundreds of people from the community as well as relatives from across the country, with an ever-expanding set of requirements in terms of food, clothing and the funeral ceremony itself. In Hamburg, these changes, described by many as "becoming modern," were a source of profound ambivalence. Everyone I spoke to felt it was absolutely necessary to spend large amounts of money to provide a decent funeral. Unless a family was exceptionally poor, they would be expected to provide at least tea and bread to visitors during the week(s) preceding the event; to rent a marquee tent for the funeral day; to purchase a coffin from one of the parlours in Peddie; and to provide food to all the guests after the funeral ceremony (ideally meat from a cow slaughtered the day before, as well as vegetables, salads, fried chicken and soft drinks). Some people, like Nolumanyano, actively embraced the necessary expense as a sign both of respect for the dead and socioeconomic advancement. Most voiced strong criticisms (mirrored in the regional and national press)⁹, yet complied with the norms all the same.

⁹ For example, "Dying is getting too pricey" (Nair 2004), "Lavish funerals eat up resources" (Malibongwe 2000), and "The killing cost of burying our dead" (Moore 2003).

At the same time, in a relatively tight-knit community like Hamburg at least, funerals act as a strong social glue, binding relatives, neighbours and friends together in webs of reciprocity spun out of continual exchanges of money, gifts, labour and emotional support. A key component of these webs are numerous informal 'buying' or credit clubs. Known as *imigalelo*, *oorhuqa* or *imibutho* (sing. *umgalelo*, *urhuqa*, *umbutho*), these clubs resemble rotating credit associations (Ardener 1964) where members are expected to pay in a fixed amount of money in rotation, allowing each one in turn to receive a large sum to make a big purchase or cover a major expense. Most of the clubs in Hamburg, however, work on a contingency basis: funds are only collected and disbursed when a particular member needs them. The main burial club in the community, the Ocean Burial Society, had a membership of approximately 150 in 2005, with slightly more women than men. In contrast, the smaller clubs, designed to collect food and beverages for the funeral, had, on average, 20 members, almost exclusively women. Women played a crucial role in organizing and financing funerals, although in the public arena (particularly the funeral day) men were predominant. A major exception was the prayer meeting of the women's *iimanyano* (prayer groups, sing. *umanyano*). Held on Thursdays, this meeting was attended and conducted entirely by women, dressed in the uniforms of their respective churches.

I came to understand that, as far as cultural perceptions, values and roles were concerned, funerals were a rich site of continuity and change, of contestation and conformity. In terms of what constituted a 'decent' ceremony, there was an unresolved tension between nostalgia for the simple, respectful funerals of the past and the desire or obligation to comply with the new, status-oriented standards of the present. Gender roles

conformed to normative patterns, yet behind the scenes, women appeared to be carving out new spaces and writing new scripts for themselves. Finally, in spite of ambivalent feelings and the considerable financial burden funerals placed on most families, the very elaborateness of the event seemed, in large part, to be what helped people through the grieving process: the ongoing cycle of prayers, speeches and singing at the prayer meetings in the week(s) prior; the necessary cooperative labour of so many people; the attendance of large numbers of friends and relatives from near and far.

Although debates about contemporary ‘black’ African¹⁰ funerals in South Africa feature prominently in newspapers and magazines, there appears, as yet, to be relatively little on the subject in the academic literature. The works I found were mainly focused on the ritual, psychological and religious aspects of funerals, paying virtually no attention to their social and material ramifications (see, for instance, Solomon 1986; van Heerden 2002; Wüstenberg 2001; Zide 1984). Furthermore, I did not find any studies that looked at funerals in the context of the HIV/AIDS crisis. I felt it was important to document how families in one community are coping with the frightening number of deaths, to hear and convey their views on how they choose to make those deaths meaningful. Using as a guide my initial question—namely why, in a disadvantaged rural community like Hamburg, families consider it extremely important to spend a lot on funerals, particularly given the economic burden of HIV/AIDS in both the short and long term—I explore, in

¹⁰ There is an ongoing debate in South Africa about whether ‘African’ refers to black people of African birth only or encompasses all people of African birth, regardless of ‘race’ or ethnicity (Tomaselli 2003). In his “I am an African” speech marking the adoption of the 1996 Constitution, then-Deputy President Thabo Mbeki described the various indigenous and immigrant peoples in South Africa’s history who make up that identity (Mbeki 1999). The funerals and mourning practices described in this thesis are, however, very different from those associated with ‘white’ or European culture in South Africa. Conversely, they share many similarities with funerals in other sub-Saharan countries, for instance Ghana (Arhin 1994; de Witte 2001; Van der Geest 2000), Nigeria (Smith 2004) and Cameroon (Geschiere 2005). While I prefer not to use the problematic category of ‘race’ as a cultural marker, it is sometimes necessary to do so, since a lot of South Africa’s social, economic and cultural realities reflect the country’s history of racial discrimination.

this thesis, the ways in which funerals both reflect and intersect with the structural and symbolic changes that have been shaping South Africa since 1994.

Reflections on positionality

Nozibele: Why are you white people so interested in Xhosa customs? Especially because you can only understand things from what people tell you, not by yourselves.

All interpretations are provisional; they are made by positioned subjects who are prepared to know certain things and not others. (Rosaldo 1989:8)

As I shall describe in the following chapter, I am committed to approaches in anthropology that do not despair of the ethnographic enterprise altogether, but critically examine the conditions and forms in which its ‘knowledges’ are produced. An effort to recognize and explicitly state one’s various social and disciplinary locations—to expose biases, limitations and rationales in the field and in the text—goes a long way toward undoing the tropes of ‘authority’ for which the discipline has been roundly (and rightly) criticized (Clifford 1988). As Robinson (1994:217) indicates, it is not only obvious social markers like race, class and gender that shape the research and writing process, but also factors such as “details of disciplinary location, physical location during research, political persuasion, personality” and so on. Part of producing what Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1992:28, 30) describes as a “good-enough” ethnography, which recognizes itself as “an instrument of cultural translation that is necessarily flawed and biased,” involves “keep[ing] the cuts and sutures of the research process openly visible and suppress[ing] the urge to smooth over the bumps with a lathe.”

I arrived in Hamburg to do fieldwork with some malaise about my motivations and purpose, and the usefulness of the entire endeavour. I had spent the previous six

months in graduate seminars wrestling with issues of power, ethics and representation in a discipline reeling from trenchant critiques of its alignment with colonialism and ongoing structures of inequality. Yet, here I was, privileged enough to have travelled halfway around the world to inquire into the lives of people whose reality was very different to my own, and who have historically been “mapped” and “othered” by a variety of white commentators, including anthropologists—sometimes in detrimental ways (e.g., Sharp 1981).

How we come across to people and the ways in which we are slotted in an unfamiliar social setting is always a bit of a mystery. I certainly expected, for instance, that given the history of South Africa, my ‘whiteness’ would be more of a barrier to getting to know Xhosa people than it actually was. The degree of generosity, openness and inclusiveness of most people I met in Hamburg never ceased to amaze me. I think that a lot of this feeling of goodwill comes from the very important work that members of the Keiskamma Trust, Carol Hofmeyr in particular, have been doing to build bridges, heal the wounds of the past, and substantively improve the quality of life for so many in the community¹¹. Time and time again, people would talk to me about Carol, her “clean heart,” and how much she has done for the people of Hamburg. The fact that I was living with the Hofmeyr family and, for a short time, was involved with the work of the Trust, undoubtedly made it much easier for me to establish relationships in the community than would otherwise have been the case.¹² At the same time, the fact that I was living on the

¹¹ Carol’s work and her impact on people’s lives in Hamburg is movingly captured in the documentary film by Miki Redelinghuys, *Keiskamma, A Story of Love* (2006).

¹² When Liberty and I went to visit funeral parlours in Peddie, for instance, we were viewed with considerable suspicion. At one of the parlours, the woman at the reception was openly hostile to me, refusing to answer my questions about the services they offered. I suggested to Libby that we just leave. He stayed to ask the woman whether she treated potential customers like that. Her reply was, “No, it’s just

‘white’ side of town, meant I was not immersed in daily Xhosa life, and both my cultural and linguistic competence suffered as a result. This is a major limitation of this study, and Nozibele’s critique, cited at the beginning of this section (cf. Owusu 1978), is well taken.

Being white in a rural community like Hamburg continues to connote, among other things, power and privilege. In relative terms, these impressions are, by and large, entirely accurate. Through my daily interactions with Xhosa people, I began to understand the damage and legacy of apartheid in a far more visceral way than ever before. People who were gifted and dynamic—who in other circumstances would have been extremely successful—were held back, frustrated and angered by their lack of skills, training and opportunities for material advancement. This really brought home to me the ways in which apartheid, as author Sindiwe Magona puts it, “bonsaid” whole generations of black South Africans¹³.

Black African women have been most disadvantaged by the legacy of apartheid (e.g., Andrews 2001; Mager 1996, 1999). Colonial and apartheid legislation was damaging to women in specific ways—for instance by codifying and bolstering customary or ‘native’ law in a manner that shored up patriarchal power and deprived women of key rights. The migrant labour system broke up families, leaving women in the rural homelands in a situation of economic dependency and extreme poverty. Current

because she’s white. If it was you who came to ask the questions, I would have told you everything you want to know.”

¹³ In her story “Now that the pass has gone,” Magona (1991:168) writes: “. . . children, men, women—in their millions, bonsaid . . . by the pass—have they not survived? Just by being alive, being here to tell the tale, have they not triumphed? Now that the pass has gone, deep down will the roots go; and the tree shall burst the sweetest of fruit amidst blazing flower. Surely, now that the pass has gone . . . surely, the starved and shriveled roots will swell and spread and throb, shooting branches far and wide. Surely, the time is now, now that the pass has gone.” In 1950, under the Group Areas Act, the newly elected apartheid government tightened pass laws that had been existence since the 19th century, severely curtailing and controlling the movements, residence and employment of black people in South Africa’s cities and surrounding townships. The police had the right to demand a person’s pass at any time; failure to produce a valid one usually resulted in immediate arrest. The laws were finally abandoned in 1986 (Dennie 1997:230–1; Hindson 1987).

statistics reflect this legacy and its continued effects: on average, black African women experience the highest rates of HIV infection, poverty, unemployment and rape (Albertyn 2003; Andrews 2001; Gilbert and Walker 2002; Steyn 2002). I was therefore particularly sensitive to women's realities in Hamburg and what funerals—in which women play such an important part—could reveal about gender roles. The fact that I am a woman no doubt led me to pay closer attention to certain aspects of funerals over others. It also meant that certain topics came up in conversations that almost certainly would not have, had I been a man. During the seven months I was in Hamburg, I formed close relationships with several women whose strength and resourcefulness I greatly admire, and whose company I miss. Whatever I have been able to understand about funerals, Xhosa cultural norms and life in Hamburg is in large part thanks to them.

Nozibele asked me the pointed question cited at the beginning of this section as we were returning from the cemetery after a burial. At the time, I was at a loss to answer. Why, indeed, was I so interested in Xhosa 'customs' and what did I hope to be able to learn and say about them? I still cannot provide an entirely satisfactory answer, other than to say that, despite its flaws, anthropology still holds for me the promise of mutual enrichment and understanding. In the context of a country where people, until quite recently, were forced to inhabit separate worlds, this possibility is personally very meaningful and is also a necessary part of building something new and better. History leaves its marks. There are no easy ways around these realities; we simply have to work through them as best we can.

Chapter description

In the following chapter, I highlight key works from the anthropology of death literature and identify the theoretical approaches I have found most helpful in elucidating my ethnographic data. In Chapter Three, I describe the community of Hamburg and my research methodology. Chapter Four provides a historical framework for this study. Written with a non-specialist reader in mind, it is broad in scope and marks the events I considered most pertinent to understanding present-day realities in Hamburg.

Chapter Five offers an overview of a typical funeral ‘format’ through the lens of one specific funeral, blended with details from other funerals I attended during my fieldwork. It is impossible to describe the emotional effect of people’s strong and beautiful voices in song, prayer and testimony, and the way these voices are spontaneously woven, over the course of several hours, into a virtuosic performance of commemoration and consolation. I hope, simply, to have conveyed some of the ‘feel’ of these moving ceremonies, whose power, to be fully appreciated, must be experienced in the moment.

In Chapter Six, I introduce the concepts of *masincedisane* (“let us help each other”) and *ukwakh’umzi* (“building the homestead”)—two Xhosa cultural norms which, as Ainslie (2005) and others have indicated (e.g., Bank 1997; Hammond-Tooke 1974; McAllister 1986, 2001) inform moral and material practices in a broad range of social contexts. I go on to explore how the *masincedisane* norm, in particular, operates in two spheres of funeral-related activity that are the exclusive preserve of women: the work groups of young, usually married neighbours and kin (*makotis*) who, during the week or two of prayer meetings and on the funeral day itself, come to the home of the bereaved

family to help clean and spruce up the house, and prepare and serve food; and the buying clubs that provide a significant proportion of the food and drinks required. I consider the possibilities for solidarity and empowerment afforded by these spaces, as well as by the women's prayer groups (*iimanyano*) that are a predominant part of the funeral proceedings.

In Chapter Seven, I consider how the cultural project of 'building the homestead' is becoming increasingly overlaid with symbols of 'modernity,' and how these symbols are shaping current spending patterns. I reveal tensions and ambivalences regarding the 'spending trend' and its cultural significance, as expressed by interviewees. I then consider how HIV/AIDS intersects with these tensions. I conclude this thesis by interrogating the ways in which funerals in a local context such as Hamburg speak to broader issues, namely the South African government's nation-building project encapsulated in the term 'African Renaissance.'

CHAPTER 2

DEATH IN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

In this chapter, I offer a brief review of key trends in anthropological approaches toward death and death rituals, which may be broadly characterized as intellectualist, functionalist, structural-functionalist and political/processual. From this body of literature, it is the latter approach that I have found most germane to analyzing my ethnographic data. Since I am interested in the consumption of certain types of goods in the context of funerals, I also refer to works on material culture (Appadurai 1986; Miller 1995, 1998), particularly as it pertains to 'modernity' in the African context (e.g., de Witte 2001; Piot 1999; Rowlands 1996).

1) The anthropology of death

The study of death rituals is a positive endeavor. In all societies, regardless of whether their customs call for festive or restrained behavior, the issue of death throws into relief the most important cultural values by which people live their lives and evaluate their experiences. (Huntingdon and Metcalf 1979:2)

If death-related beliefs and practices are, indeed, key to understanding how people give meaning to their lives, the subject has received surprisingly uneven treatment in the anthropological literature. This, despite the fact that, as Huntingdon and Metcalf (1979:5) observe, archaeological evidence and ethnographic accounts of death and burial customs have yielded key empirical and theoretical understandings within the discipline. Scholars surveying the death literature from the nineteenth century to the present tend to find it curiously wanting (Palgi and Abramovitch 1984). Robben (2004:1–2) remarks on how,

after a promising beginning with the enquiries of Frazer (1976) and Tylor (1958), followed by the pursuits of Durkheim and the *Année sociologique* group, as well as the early ethnographies of the British structural functionalist school, the anthropology of death faded into obscurity, only to be revived in the 1970s. Some suggest that the lack of sustained attention to death in anthropology might reflect the degree to which the subject has become a source of discomfort, anxiety and denial in the Western context, which continues to inform much of the anthropological research agenda (Palgi and Abramovitch 1984). Fabian (2004) contends that a major cause of the marginalization of death in anthropology has been its widespread parochialization and exoticization—the reduction of the “supreme dilemma” to folkloricized ceremonies and ritual practices, kept at a safe remove from our own social and existential concerns. A related tendency, described by Robben (2004:1) has been to romanticize “other” death cultures, perceiving in them a richness of ritual, sacredness, intensity and communality that are sorely lacking in individualized, secularized Western societies.

While some anthropologists might continue to focus on the more exotic aspects of death and mortuary ritual (or to avoid the topic altogether), a number of recent studies have sought to engage with this difficult, but crucial subject, in more fruitful ways. Death and its related practices, it is shown, have a lot to reveal about such diverse issues as citizenship and belonging in processes of democratization, urbanization, globalization and diaspora (e.g., Aggarwal 2001; Gable 2006; Geschiere 2005; Norget 2006; Smith 2004; Thomas 2002); national identity (Lock 2004); contemporary figurings of the imaginary and the real (De Boeck 2005); and biopolitics and personhood (Kaufman and Morgan 2005), to name a few. To understand how the discipline has ‘opened up’ to the

topic of death in these ways, it is useful to trace some of the milestones in its uneven trajectory.

Anthropological approaches to death in the nineteenth century

One of the first people in the nascent discipline of anthropology to examine death and mortuary symbolism was Johann J. Bachofen, whose study *Versuch über die Gräbersymbolik der Alten* was published in 1859 (parts of this work were published under the title “An essay on ancient mortuary symbolism” in *Myth, Religion and Mother Right* in 1967). Bachofen was principally interested in how symbols of fertility, femininity and rebirth were intertwined with funeral rites in Greek and Roman mystery cults, and how the myths arising from these symbols could explain the essence of antiquity and religion in general (Bloch and Parry 1982:1). In 1871, Tylor published *Primitive Culture*, the second volume of which is devoted to tracing the origin of religion to animism and soul beliefs, which are shown to grow out of early human reflections on death, as well as dreams and visions experienced in states of altered consciousness. The life-in-death theme explored by Bachofen became the focus of Frazer’s monumental work *The Golden Bough* (1976), which traces patterns of fertility, sacrifice and reincarnation common to most of the world’s mythologies and religions. These early anthropological explorations of death aimed, within an evolutionist, universalist framework, to find in ethnographic data from ‘primitive’ societies answers to ultimate questions on the human condition. Because of their emphasis on beliefs about death, their approach has been dubbed “intellectualist” (Huntingdon and Metcalf 1979:6). They inspired many of the creative works that became the hallmarks of Modernism.

Death, ritual and social cohesion

Pioneers in the development of a coherent analytical approach toward death in the early 1900s were Émile Durkheim and contributors to the journal *Année sociologique* (1898–1912). Durkheim's landmark work is *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), in which he further developed the key principle of social cohesion (or social solidarity) through the notion of *l'âme collective* ("collective conscience")—the shared beliefs and values that bind individuals to a community and make their experience meaningful. Revising his former view of the ever-diminishing importance of religion in post-revolutionary France, Durkheim came to believe that most secular institutions and values were in fact informed by beliefs that were essentially religious in nature. In *The Elementary Forms*, Durkheim develops his thesis using the classic evolutionist framework inherited from Tylor, Frazer and others, seeking to find in the supposedly 'simplest' known religion (Australian totemism) clues to the workings of modern societies. Unlike his predecessors, however, Durkheim was not interested in amassing vast quantities of de-contextualized ethnographic data on beliefs and practices for comparative purposes, but rather in focusing on the functions of belief in a particular society, in order to derive principles of wider applicability. His basic argument, through the analysis of totemism, was that religion serves as a symbolic representation of the collective, or society (Cladis 2001:xix). It is a feeling of communal "effervescence," symbolized in objects and rituals that take on a sacred character, that give a group its social identity and ideals. These ideals are key to building, maintaining and reinforcing social cohesion:

For society to become conscious of itself and sustain its feeling of itself with the necessary degree of intensity, it must gather individuals together in sufficient concentration. Now, this concentration determines an exaltation of moral life that is expressed by a set of ideal conceptions in which the new life thus awakened is portrayed A society can neither create itself nor recreate itself without at the same time creating the ideal. (Durkheim 2001:317)

Rituals are the mechanism whereby this process of (re)creation of community occurs. 'Piacular' rituals—those conducted to overcome situations of misfortune or sadness—aim to restore the vitality of the group, countering the threat to its equilibrium:

The origin of mourning is the impression of diminishment that the group feels when it loses one of its members. But this very impression has the effect of bringing individuals together, putting them into closer contact, making them participate in the same state of the soul. And all this releases a sensation of comfort that compensates for the initial diminishment . . . [T]o commune in sadness is still to commune, and every communion of consciousness . . . increases the social vitality. (Durkheim 2001:299)

This idea of society operating according to a homeostatic principle, and ritual as the means to enforce or re-establish equilibrium, became a tenet of the British structural functionalist school and, as Goody (1962:28) notes, laid out the framework which later generations of anthropologists would use to analyze funeral ceremonies. Malinowski's analytical approach to funerals in "Magic, Science and Religion" (1954:53), for example, is essentially Durkheimian: "in all this religion counteracts the centrifugal forces of fear, dismay, demoralization, and provides the most powerful means of reintegration of the group's shaken solidarity and of the re-establishment of its morale."

The structure of mortuary ritual

Two other figures associated with French sociology at the turn of the century, Robert Hertz and Arnold Van Gennep, offered structural elaborations on the Durkheimian approach to death and mortuary ritual. Hertz' "Contribution à une étude sur

la représentation collective de la mort”¹⁴, published in *Année sociologique* in 1907, examines the social construction of death on the basis of ethnographic data on double burials from the Indonesian Archipelago. Laying the foundation for Arnold Van Gennep’s more explicit treatment of the subject, Hertz describes death as a physical/symbolic process of transition, comparable to other rites of transition such as birth, marriage and initiation. The initial temporary burial of the corpse (often at a remote distance from the community) marks a time of limbo and pollution, where dangerous forces associated with the wandering, ‘socially uprooted’ soul, need to be kept at bay by a series of taboos, exclusions and purifying rituals. The secondary burial, where the corpse is exhumed and the bones of the deceased are laid to rest in a family burial place, physically marks the reincorporation of the deceased into the community of the living, and symbolically into the community of the dead. Only at this point are living kin released from the strictures and taboos of mourning. Like Durkheim, Hertz viewed society as a superorganic entity, over and above the individuals of which it was composed. The death of an individual is a shock from which society needs to regain its balance through an elaborate drama of separation and re-integration.

Van Gennep, in *The Rites of Passage* (1960), elaborated Hertz’s insights with a tri-partite structure of the rituals marking life transitions, namely preliminal rites of separation, liminal rites of transition, and postliminal rites of incorporation. The duration and importance of each ritual phase is relative to the type of transition in question. In all cases, a process of death and rebirth is symbolically re-enacted. Van Gennep’s model, which continues to be influential today, was taken up by Victor Turner (1957, 1974,

¹⁴ The English translation, “A Contribution to the Study of the Collective Representation of Death,” was published in 1960, in *Death and the Right Hand*.

1977, 1982), who further explored liminality as a crucial phase to the ritual process (which he described as a “social drama”). For Turner (1982:202–6), the liminal stage or process is “a period and area of ambiguity, a sort of social limbo, which has few of the attributes of the sociocultural life that precedes and follows it.” Its three major components are the communication of sacra (sacred objects, actions and instructions); “ludic recombination” (free, playful, exaggerated variations on culturally defined ‘reality’); and the fostering of *communitas*, an egalitarian mode of sociality:

What is interesting about liminal phenomena . . . is the blend they offer of lowliness and sacredness, of homogeneity and comradeship. We are presented, in such rites, with a “moment in and out of time,” and in and out of secular social structure, which reveals, however fleetingly, some recognition . . . of a generalized social bond that has ceased to be and has simultaneously yet to be fragmented into a multiplicity of structural ties. (Turner 1977:96)

Liminality is a feature of both private and public ritual. As society in the “subjunctive mood,” it offers important possibilities for disruption (anti-structure) and self-reflexiveness:

For when elements are withdrawn from their usual settings and recombined in totally unique configurations . . . those exposed to them are startled into thinking anew about persons, objects, relationships, social roles and features of their environment hitherto taken for granted. Previous habits of thought, feeling and action are disrupted The cake of custom is broken and reflexive speculation liberated. (Turner 1982:205)

New directions: death and processes of change and continuity

The ideas and theories described above have strongly influenced more recent anthropological approaches to death and mortuary ritual. Huntingdon and Metcalf (1979) and Bloch and Parry (1982), for instance, take up Frazer’s interest in the symbols of fertility and rebirth in funeral rituals. Van Gennep’s rites of passage and Turner’s notion

of liminality are anthropological classics and continue to be widely applied, explored and expanded upon (e.g., Aggarwal 2001; Danforth 1982; Kaufman and Morgan 2005; Van der Geest 2006). As Kristin Norget (2006:113) observes, the functionalist/symbolic understanding of death as the most profound disruption possible to a community that needs to be circumscribed and transcended through ritual has informed much anthropological writing about death since the mid-twentieth century:

Funerals, then, might best be understood from such a perspective—as events where a necessary mediation takes place. In other words, a funeral is what bridges the existential chasm between life and death; it is the paradigmatic social act that stitches the individual—even after his or her last gasp—back into the collective fabric of the community.

However, as Norget (2006:114–15) goes on to observe, the meaning of death in a given cultural context, and the subsequent role of the rituals surrounding it, might not conform to this model at all:

In the course of my fieldwork in Oaxaca, I sensed a different value being according to death itself . . . [D]eath does not threaten the social order *so much as provide an occasion to revitalize it* What seemed to matter most was not the reconstitution of the community, the closure of gap left by the death of a fellow resident, but acting properly toward the dead, granting the dead an appropriate passage, permitting, if not a good life, then a “good death.” In Oaxaca, biological death is not coincident with the extinction of someone’s life as a social actor: the dead continue to exist in the lives of their surviving relatives, and the world of the dead and that of the living are tightly linked in emotional and practical exchange and interaction. The dead are social beings every bit as much as the living. [Emphasis added]

Norget’s (2006) observations led her to ask new questions: “How does continual exchange with the dead affect ‘popular’ senses of belonging—to a place and to a community? How does a belief in the ongoing social importance and value of the dead inform such a Oaxacan ‘popular’ consciousness of community?” (p. 114). In her experience of funerals in the Asante region of Ghana, Marleen de Witte (2001) similarly

came up against the limitations of ‘classic’ anthropological paradigms. Having described an elaborate funeral ceremony for a 52-year-old woman, she notes that Van Gennep’s tripartite scheme, while widely applicable,

... cannot provide much insight into the specific forms of burying the dead, such as the exuberance of Ghanaian funerals. Why should the transition to an existence after death be marked by vitality, and not, as is the case in most Western societies, by concealment and modesty? And what to make of the video men, the portrait pictures, the newly bought thanksgiving cloth, the glossy funeral programme and the golden coffin we saw at Agnes Ankobiah’s funeral? How to understand the libation to the ancestors prior to the Christian prayers, and the prohibition of [sic] serving soft drinks? And why was this particular funeral considered such a successful one? (p. 8)

What both Norget (2006) and de Witte’s (2001) observations and questions bring to the fore is that funerals are eminently self-conscious, creative processes that are concretely situated; a one-size-fits all structural schema is therefore inadequate and, quite possibly, inappropriate. Fabian (2004:54) makes much the same point in his call for a processual approach to death, which “entails an epistemological orientation which approaches conceptualizations and institutionalizations of death experience as *processes*, as productive ‘constructions of reality’ rather than disembodied schemes of logic or social control.” Since, in this view, what is being continually (re)constructed or revitalized through funeral ceremonies is nothing less than a community’s consciousness of itself, the process is not only dynamic and contingent, but also political (cf. Geschiere 2005; Jewsiewicki and White 2005; McAllister 1991).

Bloch and Parry (1982:7) contend that funeral practices revitalize “that resource which is *culturally conceived* to be most essential to the reproduction of the social order.” This reproduction is closely tied to ideas of tradition and the legitimation of an atemporal traditional authority: “Positions of authority are conceptualized as belonging to an eternal

and unchanging order, and their inviolability is therefore premised on a denial of history (p. 11). Drawing on the work of historian Philippe Ariès (1974) who, in his wide-ranging exploration of Western attitudes towards death has noted the surprising persistence (*longue durée*) of certain attitudes (*mentalités*) toward death, Ellen Badone (1989) and Nadia Seremetakis (1991) explore the nonsynchronous relationship between (conservative) death-related rituals and social change. Because of the unevenness of this relationship, Seremetakis suggests that death rituals be analyzed “as integrities with their own temporal rhythms, transformations, and levels of engagement with and disengagement from the social order” (p. 15).

Timeless ‘tradition’ becomes a resource out of which ideals for the present are created. Norget (2006), for example, describes how funeral rites in Oaxaca evoke an idealized version of community or shared social space—what she calls “the social idiom of the community.” This social idiom revolves around the popular ethical system of *confianza*—a carefully orchestrated system of reciprocity that creates a concrete image of unity that is in fact out of sync with many divisive social realities: “This collective whole—even if it is an ephemeral projection—involves establishing a unity of purpose between the living and the dead, as well as establishing or reinforcing a strong sense of local identity and social memory” (p. 153)¹⁵. The idealized social idiom created through funeral ceremonies performs a cohesive role that becomes particularly important in periods of dramatic social and material change:

¹⁵ Cf. Zolani Ngwane’s (2003:696) discussion of Hylton White’s (2001) notion of the temporal/ideal ‘disconnect’ at play in ritual: “[R]itual (re)creates a time before the troubled present, and the political economy of commensality imprints on the present an ideal set of social relations that conduce with the household of those ‘times.’ The past here does not seem to correspond to any particular historical moment. It is a past that has always been such for any particular moment; a kind of moral framework.”

Life in 'modern' Oaxaca is shot through with sharp tensions, seeming paradoxes, discordance, and fragmentation. These tensions and contradictions are, in part, inevitable symptoms of significant social flux and change Within such a setting, the social idiom of community expresses a social vision that allows the maintenance of an image of wholeness, integrity, and permanence. Whenever it is invoked, the 'popular community' proclaims a resonant traditionalism, local memories, and a sense of belonging over and above the normalizing thrust of national culture and many alienating forces of modernity, commodification, and globalization. (Norget 2006:268)

At the same time as funerals can be a site for creating and performing cohesion, they can also be a site for disruption, bringing tensions associated with very concrete historical and socioeconomic realities to the surface. Clifford Geertz (1959), in his article "Ritual and Social Change," was one of the first to point this out. He describes a funeral held for a young boy in eastern Central Java, in a town with a population divided, both politically and religiously, between an Islamic party (Masjumi) and a "nativist"/Marxist party (Permai). Despite this division, Muslim rituals continued to be the norm for ceremonies like weddings and, especially, funerals. The boy's funeral in this instance became a lightning rod for latent tensions in the community, since his family was affiliated with Permai, and the Masjumi adherents who would ordinarily have carried out the funeral rites refused to do so for political reasons, causing much consternation all round. Custom, rather than reinforcing solidarity, became its breaking point. Following Geertz, Daniel J. Smith (2004) argues, in his discussion of contemporary funerals in Nigeria, that such rituals can generate at least as much conflict as cohesion, and that both are an integral part of the process of social reproduction. Thus, while cohesion, in the Igbo community he describes, is carefully reinforced by a moral code of reciprocal obligation similar to that described by Norget (2006), inequality—specifically the growing class differentiation between urban- and rural-based kin—continually threatens

to undermine that cohesion. The social idiom of community is not a given, but something that continually needs to be worked on, against the pressures of contradictory, divisive material forces.

2) Staking out a theoretical terrain

What emerges from the above discussion is the manner in which death rituals involve a complex interplay between symbolic, temporal and material realities in the ongoing construction of social/cultural identity. On the one hand, funerals are an occasion for people to forge an idealized “social idiom of community” by drawing on ideas, values and ‘traditions’ that are quite likely out of sync with lived realities. On the other, they are a flashpoint for tensions that are very closely tied to a specific time and place. If one accepts the premise of Huntington and Metcalf (1979:2), cited at the beginning of this chapter, that “death throws into relief the most important cultural values by which people live their lives and evaluate their experiences,” then funerals are a crucial site in which to explore the negotiation of those values—a process of change and continuity, or, as social actors themselves often put it, between ‘tradition’ (or ‘culture’) and ‘modernity,’ that is particularly fraught, because the stakes are so high. The process is further complicated by the fact that stakeholders do not necessarily share a common vision of the common good. As de Witte (2001) and Smith’s work (2004) would suggest, possibilities for tension are exacerbated in societies undergoing profound structural changes such as democratization and incorporation into the global economy. Important

questions to ask therefore are who has vested interests in which interpretations and why?¹⁶

It is in terms of this complex interplay between symbolic and material factors, and their relationship to time and power, that I propose to examine funerals in this thesis. As my brief introductory account of how I came to be interested in the subject indicates, death-related beliefs and practices do not belong to a special, 'exotic' realm of ritual divorced from the material/actual concerns of everyday life; on the contrary, they are closely intertwined with them (cf. Norget 2006). My approach is informed by theories in anthropology that seek to interrogate systems of meaning in relation to structural/material circumstances (e.g., the 'culture' and political economy approach described by Lamphere et al. 1997, and Bourgois 2003). I have also found useful the historically 'grounded,' yet provisional and reflexive nature of the 'neomodernist' anthropology proposed by Jean and John Comaroff (1992:27):

. . . we take culture to be the semantic space, the field of signs and practices, in which human beings construct and represent themselves and others, and hence their societies and histories Neither langue nor pure parole, it never constitutes a closed, entirely coherent system. Quite the contrary: Culture always contains within it polyvalent, potentially contestable messages, images, and actions. It is, in short, a historically situated, historically unfolding ensemble of signifiers-in-action, signifiers at once material and symbolic, social and aesthetic.

Within a framework that seeks to interrogate 'culture' (or funerals) as a dynamic, historically and materially situated semantic space, Turner's concepts of "social drama" and liminality are, in my view, fruitful. As Norget (2006:12-13) observes, funerals are an event used by social actors "to affirm a relation to a past, a future, and a present community and to mark themselves off as members of a distinct community." A funeral

¹⁶ As McAllister (1991:129) observes, ritual functions in relation to both macro-political contexts and micro-political interests.

is a frame which, while closely connected to daily reality, remains, all the same, a space—and a time (cf. Seremetakis 1991)—apart, affording the type of self-reflexive, creative and potentially disruptive cultural constructions that, in Turner's terms, belong to the phase of liminality. There is a very deliberate dramatization involved: culture and communal identity are put under the spotlight.

In looking at funerals as a site of “cultural performance”¹⁷ in the terms I have described, I will also pay close attention to the role of material culture. By material culture, I am referring, following Seremetakis (1991:9), not only to the “semantically dense” items associated with funerals such as clothing, coffins, flowers and so on, but also “embodied acts”—the organizational, financial and participatory activities required to actualize the event. As indicated in the introduction to this thesis, funerals bring into play important relationships of reciprocity and patterns of consumption, which have both cohesive and disruptive effects (often expressed as ambivalence regarding the moral/cultural value of ‘respect’). In exploring why (and how) people spend on funerals in Hamburg, I have found useful the basic premise of material culture studies—namely that social worlds are as much constituted by materiality as vice versa, and that “some things [therefore] matter” (Miller 1998). In particular, I will be drawing on Appadurai's (1986:5) argument that a productive way to explore the “politics of value” in a given social setting is to follow the trajectories (or “paths”) of commodities (“things that are exchanged”):

Even if our own approach to things is conditioned necessarily by the view that things have no meanings apart from those that human transactions, attributions, and motivations endow them with, the anthropological problem is that this formal truth does not illuminate the concrete, historical circulation of things. For that we have to follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their

¹⁷ The phrase was popularized by Milton Singer (1959), cited in MacAloon (1984:4).

forms, their uses, their trajectories. It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven things.

In his discussion of the “cultural topography” of wealth in rural Lesotho, James Ferguson (1992) demonstrates how following commodity paths along the processual and political lines suggested by Appadurai provides important insights into how value/wealth is culturally constructed and what stakes different categories of people have in that construction.

As stated above, commodities play an important role in funerals in Hamburg not only important as objects of exchange, but also as objects of consumption. To consider this role, I will be following Miller’s (1995) contention that, in the contemporary global context, identities and relationships are increasingly defined by consumption. Specifically, I will consider how consumption and modernity intersect in the African context in the forging of what the Comaroffs (2004) call an “Afromodernity” (cf. Rowlands 1996; Piot 1999).

In my introduction, I described my interview with Nolumanyano, which gave me my first real insight into the enormous expenses a funeral in Hamburg can entail. Her response to my question as to why her family had chosen to spend so much on her mother’s funeral was, “We had the feeling, ‘Let us do a nice thing, a big thing,’ because we thought it was a thanksgiving to her.” Earlier, I cited Norget’s (2006:115) important point that, in order to probe the meaning of death—specifically a “good death” in the Oaxacan context—one has to understand that rather different ontological categories from ‘Western’ constructions are at work: “The dead continue to exist in the lives of their surviving relatives, and the world of the dead and that of the living are tightly linked in

emotional and practical exchange and interaction.” Following Piot (1999) and Strathern (1988), who take up the challenge of postcolonial scholarship to problematize ‘Western’ epistemologies when engaging with ways of being and doing in non-Western contexts, I will seek to be critically aware of the biases and limits informing my modes of understanding and analysis. While, as both Piot (1999:24) and Strathern (1988:11–12) argue, we cannot extract ourselves from our knowledge practices, we can certainly expose and displace them, opening up a productive space of dialogue and possibilities for richer understandings. Through my interactions and conversations with people in Hamburg, I came to realize the economist/utilitarian/individualist paradigms informing my notions of money, relationships and personhood—reflected most obviously in what seemed, at first, to be a ‘logical’ research question. The financial outlay of Nolumanyano’s family, given their overall economic circumstances, just didn’t make ‘sense.’ My fieldwork and subsequent reflections on what I learned, have led me at least to get a sense of how relationships, money and personhood can be experienced and understood in fundamentally different ways. This thesis is therefore an attempt both to provide some answers to my original question, and also to de-centre that question and understand what it *means* for a Xhosa family in Hamburg to “do a nice thing, a big thing” for a departed loved one.

CHAPTER 3

SITUATING MY RESEARCH

SECTION 1: HAMBURG: A COMMUNITY OF MANY CONTRASTS

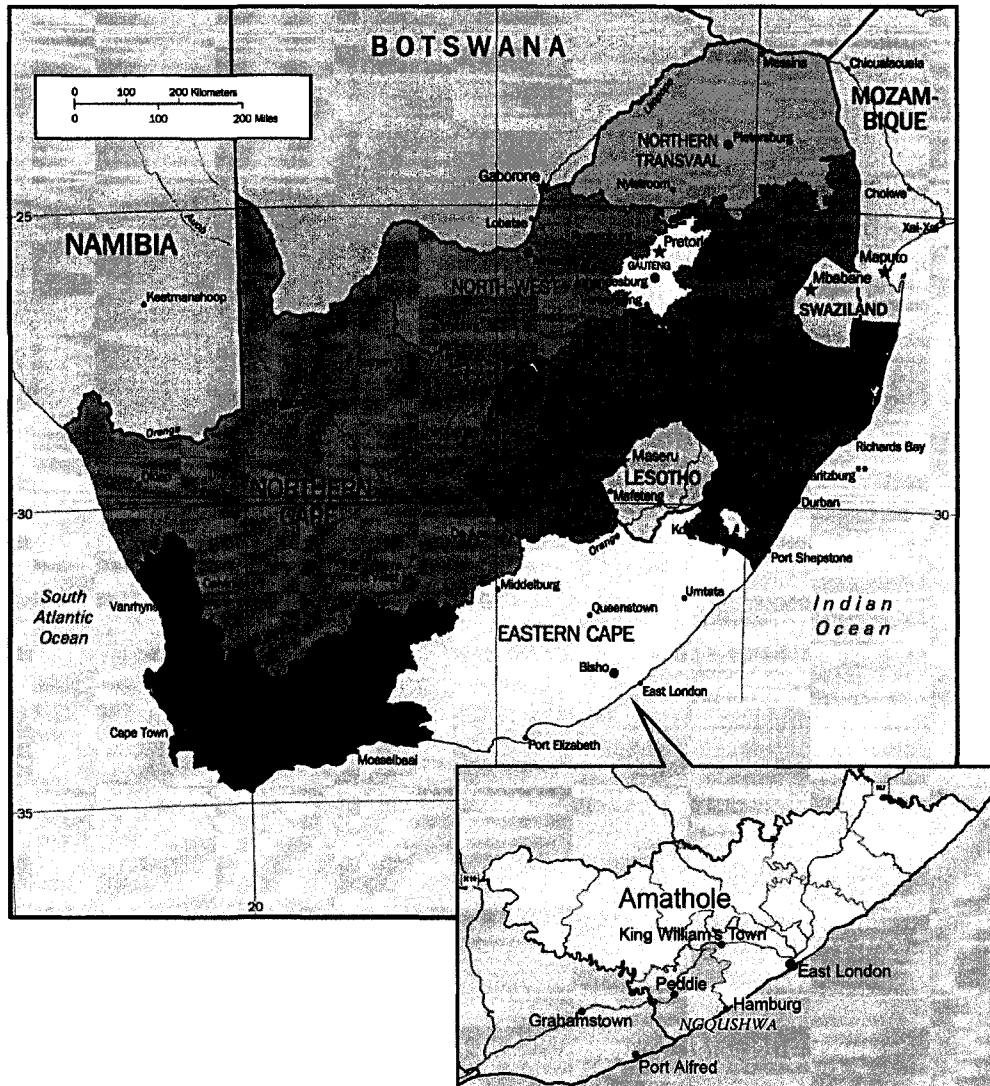
My partner, Farid, had joined me in South Africa for a holiday, and was accompanying me on my second trip to Hamburg. After driving for about an hour from East London, we turned off the highway onto a dirt road. I remember feeling a little apprehensive, particularly as I knew security issues were going through Farid's mind. It was on this very same road, three years ago, that two female academics had been brutally assaulted¹⁸. I looked at the open fields, dotted with houses and rondavels in bright shades of pink, yellow and green, and wondered what kinds of lives were lived in them. We passed by Xhosa people walking on the road. I wasn't sure how to look at them, because I was acutely aware of how they were probably looking at us: rich umlungu¹⁹ holiday-makers on their way to Hamburg. We passed a row of bluegum trees and then the river came into view. "It's so beautiful," Farid said. It was indeed very beautiful: the placid water winding towards the sea, plump Nguni cattle strolling nonchalantly across the road, lush green grass on the river side. As we neared the tar road that marked the entrance to Hamburg, a group of teenagers—girls wearing tight jeans and colourful bandanas, guys in oversize hoodies—turned to watch us.

Hamburg (population approximately 3,000²⁰) is a village located in the Eastern Cape province, on a pristine stretch of coastline, approximately half-way between East London and Port Alfred (see Map 1). It lies in an area formerly known as the Ciskei,

¹⁸ "End of brutal rampage" (Donian 2002).

¹⁹ *Umlungu* is the word used to describe someone of European descent. Whether or not it has a derogatory connotation depends on who you talk to. Some local white people assured me it meant something akin to "scum of the sea," while Peter Mtuze, in his *Introduction to Xhosa Culture* (2004:161), states that in its present-day usage, the word is quite innocuous and even has positive connotations: "If someone is performing well in anything he is said to be an 'umlungu.' If one is strict about keeping time, he is said to be 'umlungu.' If a girl is beautiful, she is called 'umlungukazi.'"

²⁰ See *Pro-Poor Tourism in Hamburg* (2004). In the Hamburg Household Economics and Health (HHEH) Survey 2005 (see Section 2 in this chapter), we arrived at a total of 1,083 (1,043 Xhosa and 40 non-Xhosa residents). Part of the discrepancy may be explained by the fact that our survey only covered 310 out of the some 566 households in the community and did not include the neighbouring village of Ntilini. Ainslie (2005:28) estimated the Xhosa population of Hamburg to be 1,500.



Map 1 – South African provinces and Amathole District Municipality²¹

which was a site of protracted wars between indigenous Xhosa-speaking tribes and European colonists. In 1857, the British settled the area with over two thousand German mercenaries, of whom some one hundred arrived in Hamburg, so named after the port

²¹ These are adapted versions of the map South Africa (Provinces) 1995, provided by the University of Texas Libraries at www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa, and a map of Amathole District Municipality on South Africa's Municipal Demarcation Board website at www.demarcation.org.za.

from which they had departed (Schnell 1954). Hamburg fell within Peddie District which became part of the Ciskei ‘homeland’ created by the apartheid government. Following the country’s first democratic election in 1994, the Ciskei was incorporated into the Eastern Cape province. In 1999, there was a nation-wide redemarcation of municipal and district boundaries. Peddie District was incorporated into the Amathole District Municipality, and Hamburg, as a former ‘urban centre,’²² was twinned with the town of Peddie (approximately 50 minutes away) to form Ngqushwa Municipality (see Map 1)²³.

Located at the end of a 14-km gravel turnoff from the R72 highway, at the mouth of the Keiskamma River, Hamburg is a village of breathtaking natural beauty (see Figure 1). The paved road from its entrance runs parallel to the river through “Town”²⁴ (see Map 2). Towards the estuary, the road ascends into the more affluent neighbourhood (known as “Emagqubeni”²⁵) where there are a number of bigger houses and holiday properties with impressive views of the sea. Rocky, gravel roads lead to the village’s six other informal neighbourhoods: “Eqolweni,” on the seaward side (see Figure 2), “Enkqo-qhaga,” “Egogogweni,” “Phola Park,” “Elalini” and “Endlovini”²⁶. The beach is an endless expanse of soft white sand, swept up by frequent winds into massive dunes, fringed with dense indigenous forest.

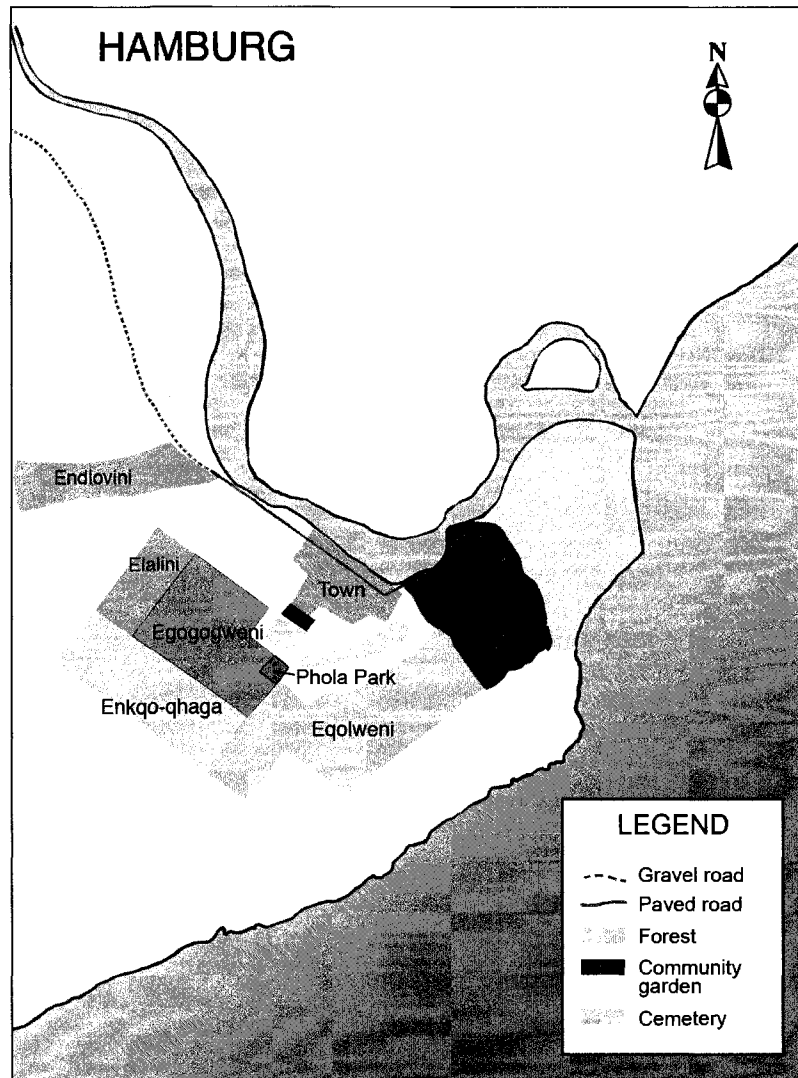
²² Ainslie (2005:27) indicates that Hamburg’s ‘urban’ status was based on its having had a village board and commonage for most of the twentieth century.

²³ Ngqushwa is one of the eight municipalities that fall under the Amathole District Municipality.

²⁴ The “Town” area used to be called “Emajamenani” (The Germans).

²⁵ This is locally known as the ‘white’ area of Hamburg.

²⁶ As Zukiswa Pakama explained to me, “Enkqo-qhaga” (a word that means “locks on the doors”) gets its name from the fact that most people living there in previous decades were working in the cities and would only return to Hamburg for the December holidays. “Egogogweni” is an area where a lot of traditional beer parties were held. The word comes from *igogogo*, which is a 25-litre bucket used to make beer. “Phola Park” is known as a place to have fun. “Endlovini,” the poorest area, consisting largely of illegal shacks, is derived from the Xhosa word for elephant (*ndlovu*). Just as an elephant destroys things when it gets angry, the people of “Endlovini” built their shacks without caring about the law, because they were angry about waiting so long to be granted plots of land.



Map 2 – The village of Hamburg²⁷

²⁷ This is an adapted version of a map obtained from Ngqushwa Municipality.



Figure 1 – View of Hamburg

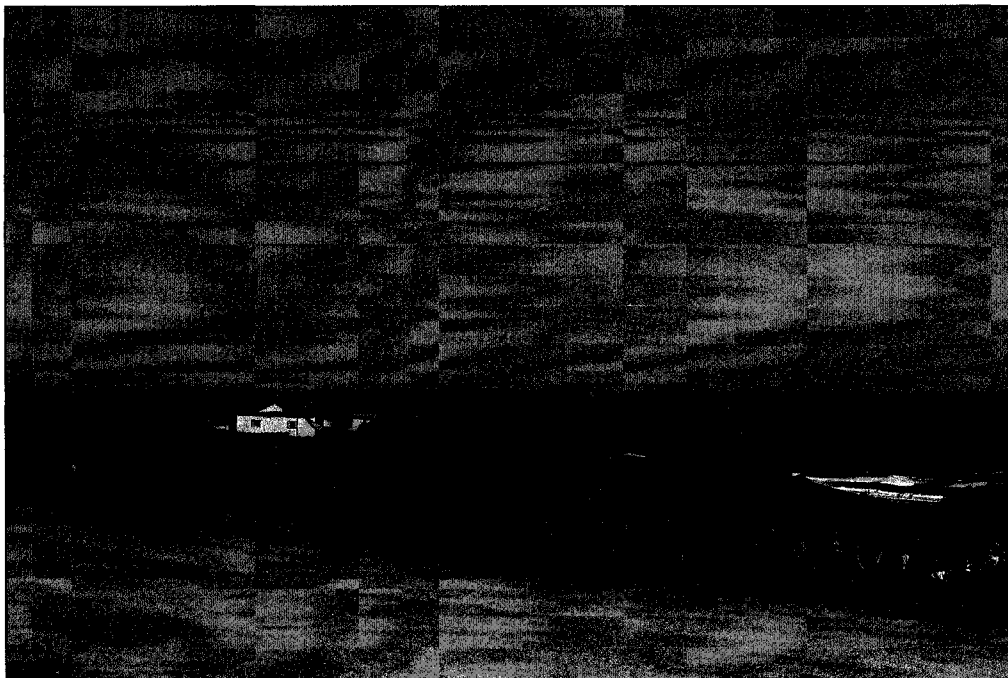


Figure 2 – “Eqolweni” neighbourhood

From the early 1900s, Hamburg was a popular holiday resort for local white farmers. One interviewee described going there at Christmas-time in the 1930s:

June: The houses then were wood and iron shacks; they were retirement or holiday cottages for farmers around Wesley. There was no piped water or electricity—we had to use generators and paraffin lamps. My family used to camp on the river beach in an ox wagon. They built “skerems” (tents) out of sails and timber with hessian round the sides. About twenty families would camp like this during the Christmas holidays. They would dig holes in the beach to get water for washing, and they transported drinking water down from the farm in milk pails, kept cool by the breeze under the wagons. That was a happy time of life—it was lots of fun for socializing. One of the cottages was nicknamed “Cirrhosis by the Sea”!

Another couple reminisced about Hamburg’s hey-day in the 1950s and ’60s:

Max: It was one of those places—it was unbelievable. The amount of people that used to come here! It was really a very busy place, Hamburg. On a Saturday evening in the bar there—the bar was lined up with people . . .

Lilian: You’ve got no place to go, I’m telling you. The hotel was full—even the dining room. This place was a gold mine before.

Vanessa: And people came from East London?

Lilian: All over! The whole Eastern Cape area.

From the mid-1970s, however, the South African government started buying up the properties of white homeowners in order to transfer them to the fledgling Ciskei ‘state.’ During the Ciskei’s ‘independence’ under apartheid, Hamburg became much more insular; businesses closed and several properties fell into disrepair. In recent years, efforts have been made to boost the economy through community-based tourism initiatives, aimed at preserving the natural environment and providing maximum benefit to the local population.²⁸ In 2004, the Amathole District Municipality, in conjunction with The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT), launched The Amathole Heritage Initiative to develop four heritage tourism routes comprising several

²⁸ In 2000, Afesis-corplan, an NGO based in East London, partnered with Ngqushwa municipality to develop tourism strategies for Hamburg. The results are described in the organization’s publication *Pro-Poor Tourism in Hamburg* (2004).

historic sites, including Hamburg (Amathole District Municipality 2007). Although headway is being made, the village's tourist potential remains under-exploited.²⁹

Community facilities include a primary school, high school and two crèches; a fairly dilapidated mission school (the "Old School"), used as a church; a primary care clinic; the Keiskamma HIV/AIDS treatment centre; the Keiskamma Art Project studio; a town hall; a children's playground; a community garden; a police station; municipal offices; a small heritage museum and three soccer fields. Businesses include Mrs. Mei's supplies store; a liquor store; various forms of tourist accommodation (a hotel, backpackers' lodge, B & Bs, and a caravan park with restaurant and bar ("José's")); spaza or tuck shops (small convenience stores) called *izirhoxo*, and shebeens (drinking houses). Like all communities in South Africa, Hamburg bears the marks of its past. Although government reconstruction programs implemented since 1994—including community-wide electrification, installation of a reticulated water system, repair of telephone lines, and the construction of 30 subsidized housing units (Phola Park)—have improved the basic quality of life for village residents, there is still widespread poverty and huge economic discrepancies, which are largely (although not exclusively) racialized. Hamburg's white and black residents continue to inhabit quite separate worlds—a fact that became obvious in the design and administration of the Hamburg Household Economics and Health (HHEH) Survey 2005 described further on in this chapter³⁰. For

²⁹ A contributing factor has been the unresolved issue of title to property since 1994. As described in *Pro-Poor Tourism in Hamburg* (2004:7), "Formal ownership and title to property in Hamburg has been a complex and controversial issue with much of the land being state owned and many allegations of irregular transactions and leasing arrangements. A system of transferring land to the municipality by various government departments since the early 1990s has done little to resolve the matter." One of the respondents in our HHEH Survey 2005 felt that this was a major obstacle to economic development: "The moratorium on selling municipal properties must be lifted. This will create jobs because of people coming in, which would lead to a better living for everyone."

³⁰ I shall refer to this survey as the HHEH Survey 2005 for the remainder of this thesis.

the mostly middle-class white homeowners, it was inconceivable not to have hot water or a flush toilet, or, conversely, to have a vegetable garden and livestock in their back yard. For the majority of Xhosa residents surveyed, the more expensive comforts associated with a middle-class lifestyle (e.g., personal computers, cars) were simply out of reach. The disparity was clearly reflected in average monthly household incomes: R1,985 (\$397) for Xhosa households compared to at least R20,000 (\$4,000) for white households³¹. It is important to point out, however, that although these racialized contrasts are very real, they paint an over-simplified picture and one must be careful not to fall into the dualisms that have been such a persistent feature of the political, social and psychological landscapes of South Africa (cf. Ainslie 2005:9). Not all white people in Hamburg are well-off, and not all black people are poor; in several cases, quite the reverse is true. What can safely be said is that the community as a whole is characterized by significant class differentiation.

Two formidable challenges: unemployment and HIV/AIDS

Unemployment in both South Africa and the Eastern Cape province in March 2007 was officially estimated at 25.5%³². Ainslie (2005:101) identifies the two main livelihood strategies in Peddie District as 'jobbing' (short-term, piece-work employment) and social welfare grants³³. Colonial/apartheid policies aimed at concentrating black

³¹ These numbers are derived from the HHEH Survey 2005. The average household sizes for Xhosa and non-Xhosa residents were 3.5 and 2.9 respectively.

³² These statistics are taken from the Labour Force Survey (2007), published by Statistics South Africa. Unemployment rates have not changed significantly from those reported at the time of fieldwork. In 2005, national unemployment stood at 26.5%, compared to 27.1% in the Eastern Cape. These official statistics are contested: Daniel et al (2005:xxii), for instance, estimated national unemployment in 2005 to be 40 per cent.

³³ Social welfare payments have increased substantially since 1994 and make up a central portion of rural household incomes (Ainslie 2005:107-8). At the time of my fieldwork, the Child Support Grant was

South Africans in ‘reserved’ or ‘scheduled’ areas (later the ‘homelands’) rapidly resulted in over-population and deterioration of natural resources, bringing about a dramatic decline in agricultural production in these areas. From the early decades of the 20th century, households in rural areas such as Peddie District were consistently outward-focused, with high rural-urban mobility and an ever-growing dependence on migrant remittances for survival. In the post-apartheid era, a continued lack of local employment opportunities has meant ongoing rural-urban migration, but livelihood strategies have shifted in focus, with a greater dependence on social grants than on migrant remittances (Ainslie 2005; Bank 2002). Of the 296 Xhosa households that participated in the HHEH Survey 2005, 109 (37%) were entirely dependent on pensions and social grants for their survival, and 165 (56%) derived at least half of their monthly income from this source. In contrast, only 74 (25%) of respondents said they received remittances from family members outside, generally as a supplement to their household income³⁴. Out of 1,043 Xhosa household members, 27% were described as “unemployed”; 19% were receiving a Child Support Grant; 16% were students; and 19% were receiving either an Old Age Pension or Disability Grant. If one breaks down these percentages according to the 646 residents of working age (i.e., 15–65), it means that 71% were not economically active (see Figure 3).³⁵

R180/month for every child under 14; and both the Old Age Pension and Disability Grant were R780/month. Only one household reported receiving a Foster Care Grant (for an orphan dependent), which was R560/month.

³⁴ Of these, less than two-thirds received remittances on a regular basis, usually because of the unstable employment situations of urban-based family members.

³⁵ These are the age parameters used by the Labour Force Survey (2007). The breakdown for Hamburg residents of working age (n=646) is: 38% unemployed; 16% students; 7% receiving an Old Age Pension; and 10% receiving a Disability Grant.

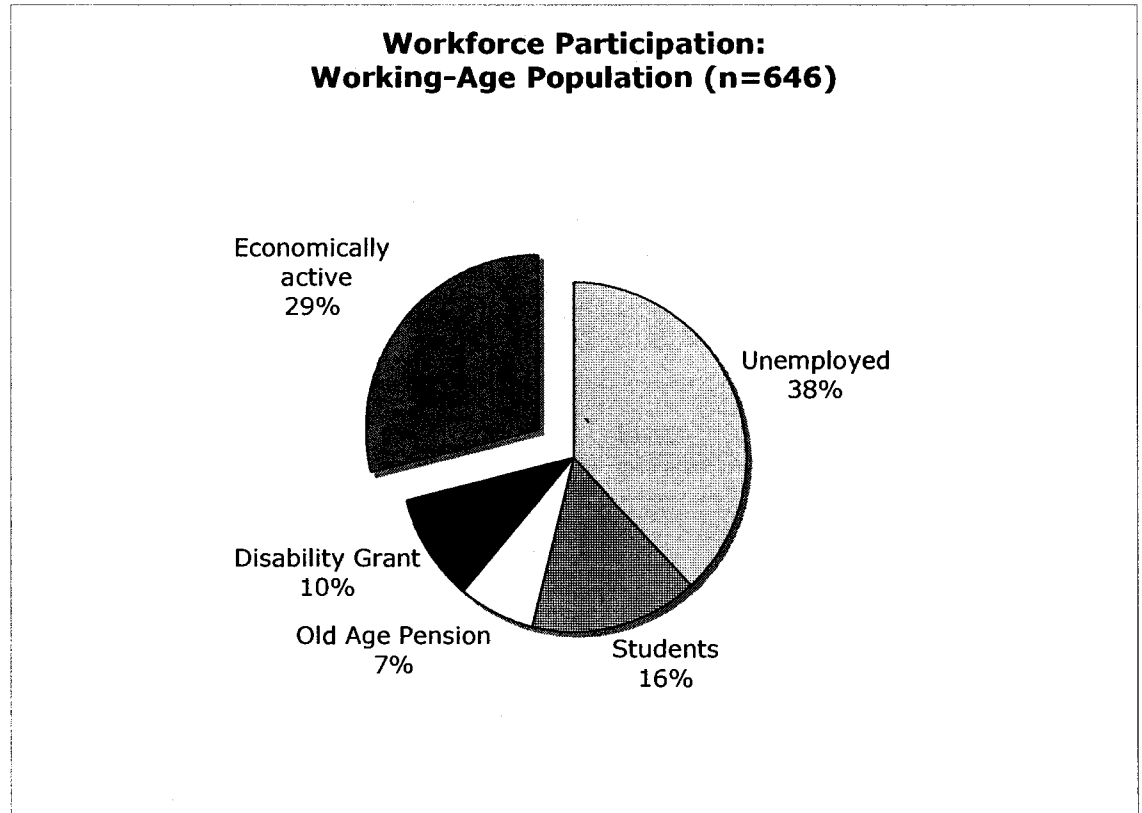


Figure 3 – Employment Status of Hamburg’s Working-Age Population (Ages 15–65)

The types of jobs or informal business opportunities available to most people in Hamburg afford limited incomes and stability. One of my interviewees, Thandiswa, vividly described the frustration of unemployment in Hamburg:

When you are frustrated, you see everything dim, you don’t have any hope. Especially in a rural area like this; you struggle for a lousy 50 cents, even to buy an apple, you just . . . you see it’s boring and frustrating, and you get very touchy, because you see yourself as you don’t have a life. And that is why some people, they just move to the townships, and stay there and find minor jobs. And you see, you will find a very great difference in that person, you will think that she has got a better job. But when you get to know, you’ll see that, no she’s just working in a restaurant, and not cooking, just cleaning. But because of the environment—that person is not in a frustrating environment, she’s out there, she’s got something. What matters is that she’s not fixed and tightened up in this. So it won’t be good at all just to stay and not to work here—you can’t even sell something, your

business is just a flop. You end up taking from your profit and buying something for your family—fish oil, beef stock, even salt. You see, you don't progress at all, instead, whatever you are trying is taking you down.

Interviewees frequently commented on the fact that people don't farm anymore, and that this is a relatively recent change. Collecting seafood, such as mussels, abalone and oysters, was also a far more common practice than it is today, since harvesting has become closely regulated³⁶. Several people were nostalgic about their greater self-sufficiency in times past, and were critical of attitudes and practices in the present, particularly among young people. For Lilian, a big part of Hamburg's 'hey-day' in the fifties and sixties, was the fact that people were more self-sufficient and resourceful:

The people who were staying here at Hamburg that time, they were helpful. They plough here, they sell pumpkins, they sell carrots, milk—even milk! They put them in baskets and bottles and they go and sell up the hill there. And there were a few people working in the hotel. When it's holiday, they employ extra people to work there. Most of Hamburg people, they live on the sea. They sell mussels to people on the holidays. They are still doing it now, but it's under control now, it's not like before People used to plough a lot those days. Like I said, they were selling mealies, green beans, pumpkins. But I would say that now, the people are lazy. The new generation, they don't want to work. Because the fields are there; they can do something. Look at this garden next to the hospice. You find only old people there! The young people, they don't want to work with their hands, now the government has got a grant to feed them.

Although, as already mentioned, agriculture in Peddie District has been on the decline since at least the 1950s, the dramatic decrease in field cultivation described by Lilian is actually quite recent. Another interviewee, Nosebenzile, said she and her husband ploughed their five acres until 1998; since then, the land has not been cultivated. Lilian's implication that the increase in government social spending has something to do with the

³⁶ This is particularly the case for abalone, which is highly prized in Asian markets. As Ainslie (2005: 112–13) indicates, in 2000, legal (and, especially, illegal) abalone harvesting substantially boosted the monthly incomes of some of Hamburg's residents. However, over-harvesting has significantly reduced abalone stocks all the way up South Africa's Eastern coastline.

change is certainly part of the picture³⁷. While field cultivation has decreased considerably, livestock and vegetable gardens are still an important source of food and supplemental income for many households. Of the 296 Xhosa households that participated in the HHEH Survey 2005, 95 (32%) had a vegetable garden; 90 (30%) had at least one pig; 167 (56%) had chickens (with an average of 8.7 chickens per household); and 84 (28%) had cows (with an average of 7.7 cows per household)³⁸.

As Ainslie (2005:107) indicates, much of the regular welfare income that has come to be such a predominant feature of livelihoods in Hamburg tends to leak rapidly out of the village to nearby urban centres like Peddie or East London where people go to buy groceries and other goods³⁹. In addition, many of the sellers of clothes, pots and foodstuffs who come to Hamburg on pension day are not local residents. When asked about how to improve life in the community, almost all of the survey respondents said job creation. Of particular concern was the situation of young people: many respondents stressed the need for youth-focused jobs and training programs (e.g., sewing, plumbing, electrical repairs, welding, carpentry, computer skills), so that young people “have something to do”; can “upgrade their studies”; and do not “drink so much because of money frustrations.” Many also expressed a desire to keep money, skills and resources in the village—for instance, by having supermarkets and clothing stores “so people don’t have to go to East London or Peddie”; by planting fruit trees “for not buying fruits far

³⁷ Cf. Ainslie’s (2005:104) observation that one of the key impacts on rural households of the post-1994 increase in social welfare grants was “[entrenching] the fact that the bulk of household livelihoods were derived from sources other than the productive use of natural resources, specifically field agriculture.”

³⁸ Ainslie (2005:317) reports higher figures: 101 households with cattle and an average holding of 10.4, although the distribution is very uneven. Of the 84 cattle-holding households in our HHEH Survey 2005, only four had more than 15 cows each (with an average of 33.8 among them). The remaining 80 households had an average of 6.4 cows each.

³⁹ Of the 196 Xhosa households that reported having monthly transport costs, 137 (70%) listed the amount of R26—the cost of a round-trip to Peddie.

away”; by having businesses “so that Hamburg’s resources, more especially fish, are not taken away”; and by creating training programs “so that we can employ more young people of Hamburg and not from Peddie!” Interestingly, when asked to describe the types of jobs they had in mind, most people indicated big businesses like seafood or clothing factories, or public works projects like litter-cleaning and road improvement. Very few talked about incentives to set up small businesses, no doubt because, as the above excerpt from my interview with Thandiswa suggests, the prospects for running a successful business in the community are, for the time being at least, not very good.

These economic hardships and frustrations are greatly exacerbated by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and vice versa (cf. Farmer 1999; Gilbert and Walker 2002). As noted in the introduction, South Africa has one of the worst HIV/AIDS epidemics in the world, with an estimated prevalence rate of 18.34% among people aged 15–49 in 2006⁴⁰. As far as mortality statistics are concerned, in February 2005, the government published a report, which, on the basis of “cause of death” listed on death notification forms, estimated that 8.7% of deaths in 2001 were due to HIV/AIDS. However, adjusting for errors of misclassification on the forms (for instance, listing the cause of death as TB or meningitis instead of HIV), the South African Medical Research Council has estimated this number to be closer to 30 per cent (Groenewald, P. et al. 2005). Figure 4 shows the causes of mortality in Hamburg between 1995 and 2005 as per our HHEH Survey 2005. It is difficult to accurately assess, on the basis of the information provided, how many of

⁴⁰ The Keiskamma AIDS Treatment Program (2007) estimates prevalence in Peddie District to be 17.5 per cent. There is a vast discrepancy between provincial estimates, because of the different design and sample populations of the two government studies used to measure prevalence rates. The South African Department of Health Study 2006, which looked at HIV prevalence among women attending antenatal clinics, found a rate of 29% for the Eastern Cape. In contrast, the South African National HIV Survey 2005, which samples as broad a cross-section of society as possible, found a prevalence rate of only 8.9% for the Eastern Cape (Noble 2007).

these deaths were caused by HIV/AIDS, because the cause of death was often indicated to be “mental disturbance” (most likely meningitis) or TB. If one groups together all the deaths that were *quite possibly* caused by an opportunistic infection (with the exception of TB), the mortality rate from HIV/AIDS in Hamburg over the past ten years has been 17% (compared to 11% from cancer; 10% from asthma; 9% from diabetes; 8% from heart failure; 6% from stroke; 6% from TB; and 6% from old age)⁴¹.

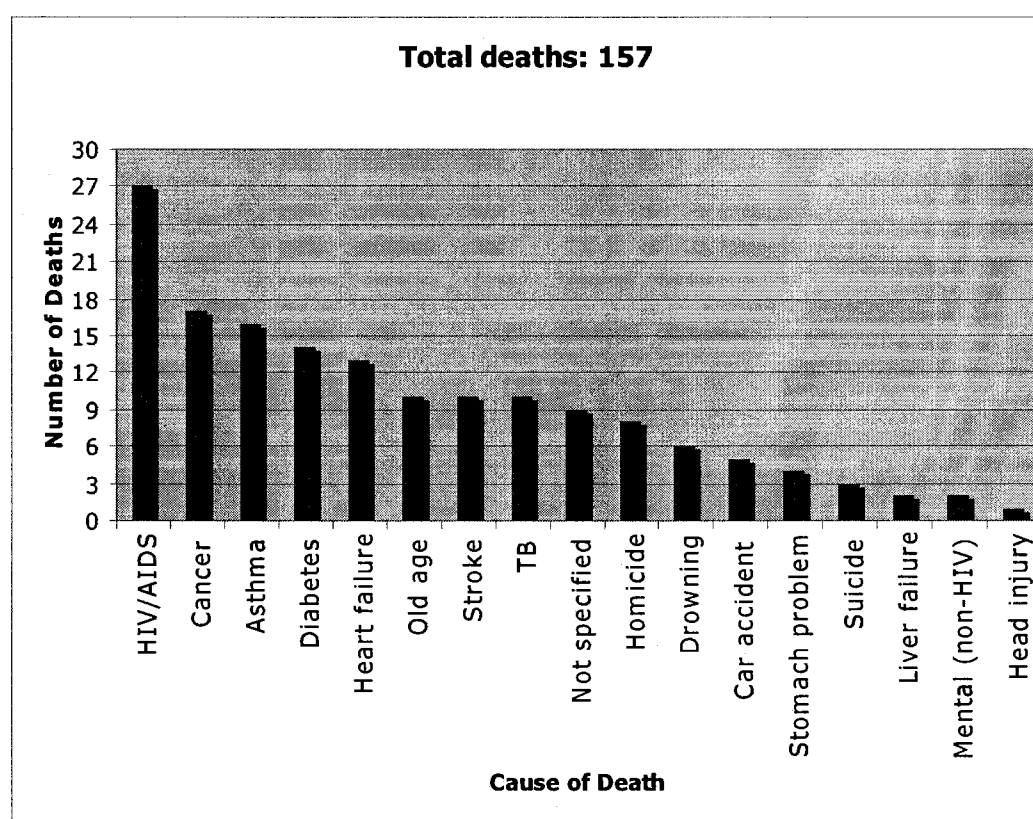


Figure 4 – Mortality in Hamburg 1995–2005

⁴¹ It is equally difficult to quantify deaths from diabetes and hypertension accurately, since both are often present at the same time, and both are major risk factors for heart disease, stroke and kidney failure. Suffice it to say that both diabetes and hypertension, also diseases with a strong correlation to poverty, are a significant health problem in Hamburg as well. Many of the deaths described as being caused by asthma were probably due to cardiac arrest.

Despite statistical variances, it is clear from the above that HIV/AIDS is a problem of enormous proportions with significant social and economic costs, particularly as the disease kills people in their prime of life⁴². Orphaned children (many of whom are also HIV-positive) are left in the care of other family members, often grandmothers, whose only source of income is their monthly government pension⁴³. The quality of life of people living with HIV/AIDS is severely compromised as the disease progresses and they develop opportunistic infections. ARV treatment is making a huge difference in this regard. During my time in Hamburg, I witnessed and heard about many cases of people being brought back from the brink of death—people who were slowly able to gain strength, put on weight and resume normal lives.

Strength of the spirit

Hamburg has a flourishing spiritual life. Eighty-two per cent of the 296 Xhosa households surveyed had at least one active church member, and 53 (18%) of households paid monthly tithes (*isishumi* or “Church gift”), in addition to funeral insurance⁴⁴. Appendix 1 gives an idea of the number and variety of denominations in the village (the origin of some of these denominations is described in the following chapter). There are no church buildings; services are held in people’s homes, in the “Old School” or occasionally in the Town Hall (see Figure 5). For a special service, congregations sometimes hire a tent. Church is a very important part of the lives of many Hamburg

⁴² The increase in the number of deaths among people aged 25 to 49 has been disproportionately high: in 1997, this age group accounted for 30% of all deaths; by 2005, this number had jumped to 42% (Noble 2007).

⁴³ In 2006, there were an estimated 1.5 million orphans in South Africa, of whom two-thirds had lost either their mother or both parents to HIV/AIDS (Dorrington et al. 2006:ii).

⁴⁴ For Methodist church members, the *isishumi* was R30 (\$6)/month.

residents, across the generations. As I will describe in Chapter 5, the extempore sermonizing and singing of church services is a vital component of funeral prayer meetings. Young people have a special place in these proceedings. Wednesdays are “youth nights,” where young people direct the prayers, singing and preaching. “Youth nights” are particularly dynamic and tend to attract a lot of people to the bereaved family’s home.



Figure 5 – A Zionist pastor leads his congregation out of his house after the Sunday service

SECTION 2: METHODOLOGY

Setting up fieldwork

A few days after my arrival in Hamburg, I left with members of the Keiskamma Arts Project for the Grahamstown National Arts Festival (June 30 to July 10), where The Keiskamma Altarpiece, the project's latest monumental artwork, was to be displayed for the first time. On my return, I spent the next month mainly helping with administrative work for The Keiskamma Trust and getting to know people in the community. I also gave extra English classes once a week at the local high school to students who were preparing for their matriculation (high school-leaving) exams in October. In early August, I began to take Xhosa lessons with a woman named Lindiwe Cuka. I was hoping Lindi could become my research assistant, but she had another job lined up, so towards the end of August, she put me in touch with a young man named Liberty Mapuma, who had recently completed a diploma in civil engineering and was back in Hamburg while he looked for a job in his field. I initially had some reservations about working with Liberty, because I had by then decided to refocus my research on funerals, and wasn't sure that a 25-year-old would be either very interested in or knowledgeable about an area that was clearly more the purview of older people in the community. I also knew that a large part of my research would continue to involve women, and so it would have made more sense to have a female research assistant. However, I found Liberty very personable and he seemed keen to get involved in my project, so we decided to give it a try. As it turned out,

we got along very well and I enjoyed our many frank conversations. He had good research instincts and played a key role in the community-wide survey described below.

Hamburg Household Economics and Health (HHEH) Survey 2005

As a result of a conversation with Carol Hofmeyr in early September, I decided to conduct a community-wide household and economics survey in collaboration with The Keiskamma Trust. Our goal was to gather quantitative and qualitative data in order to get a more accurate idea of community needs; to build a profile for fundraising purposes; and to create a report that would be made available to a variety of stakeholders (e.g., community members, visitors, researchers, investors) for information purposes. More specifically, Carol and her son Graeme, who was a Project Coordinator for the Umtha Welanga HIV/AIDS Treatment Centre⁴⁵ at the time, wanted to make the survey a part of their HIV/AIDS outreach program. The previous year, they had conducted a health survey in the village of Lover's Twist (some 25 minutes from Hamburg) which had produced excellent health care outcomes. Most people had been happy to make contact with the health volunteers administering the survey and to make their needs known. The goal, in the Hamburg survey, was similarly to get local health volunteers to make further contact with community members and to identify families in need of urgent medical care or social assistance. The health-related questions in the survey were also designed to take the pulse of people's understandings of and feelings about HIV/AIDS in order to better target prevention and treatment strategies. For the purposes of my research, I hoped to gain a better understanding of people's income and expenditure patterns, household

⁴⁵ This was the former name of the Keiskamma AIDS Treatment health centre.

composition, rates of mortality in the past decade, and general impressions of life in Hamburg.

On the basis of these joint goals, we designed a four-page survey questionnaire (see Appendix 2) to be completed in face-to-face interviews by a team of research assistants: Liberty Mapuma and two volunteer health workers from Umtha Welanga, Gladys Makhubalo and Nonzame Solwandle. At Carol's suggestion, I wrote letters to the Chairman of the local SANCO⁴⁶ committee, the Ward Councillor for Hamburg and the Mayor of Ngqushwa Municipality, describing our proposed survey for their review (see Appendix 3). On September 8, I attended a community meeting with Liberty to present the survey to all present and answer any questions. The survey was approved at that meeting and we prepared to start the interviews in the first week of October⁴⁷. Our team obtained from Ngqushwa Municipality a list of properties in Hamburg, divided by neighbourhood. On the basis of this information, I compiled a new series of lists to double-check information provided on the questionnaires and monitor the progress of the survey.

Training and supervision of research assistants

I was in charge of training and supervising the research assistants who would administer the survey questionnaire. In consultation with the project team, I wrote up a confidentiality agreement, which explained the procedure and ethics protocol for the survey, for each team member to sign (see Appendix 4). I also created a consent form, which the research assistants translated into Xhosa, explaining the survey goals and

⁴⁶ A local affiliate of the South African National Civic Organisation

⁴⁷ The survey ran from October 1 to December 16, 2005.

procedures to potential respondents, underlining, in particular, the confidentiality of all information provided (see Appendix 5). Since none of the research assistants had any experience in this type of work, I held a training session in which we went over each of the survey questions in detail and discussed interview techniques, confidentiality issues, and how to handle situations that might come up (for instance, questions about the purpose of the survey; unwillingness to participate; reluctance to answer certain questions). I gave each research assistant a small notebook in which to keep a log of their activities and write comments. Each week, we had an informal meeting in which I collected and checked their completed questionnaires, and we discussed how things were going. Particularly in the first weeks, this was an opportunity for all of us to correct mistakes and establish parameters for what became a gratifying teamwork experience. The research assistants were paid on a bi-weekly basis per number of forms completed.

Data capture, storage and analysis

Graeme Hofmeyr created a password-protected file in Microsoft Access for me to enter the data from the questionnaires. This initial phase of data entry was a good opportunity to clean up and standardize the data and to pinpoint problem areas. I kept all the completed questionnaires in a secure place and took them back to Canada with me. On my return, I completed the data entry and transferred the Access file to an Excel spreadsheet for the analysis.

Results and commentary

Out of approximately 566 households, we achieved a 55% response rate (310 households)⁴⁸. The lack of experience of the research assistants undoubtedly affected the data quality to a degree, and I did not have the time or resources to do more quality control than checking the completed questionnaires each week and cross-checking survey data with interview material. However, I believe the survey provides a reasonably accurate portrait of household composition; amenities; some household costs; funeral insurance, mutual aid club and church fees; income from social grants; and mortality rates in the past ten years. It is notoriously difficult to obtain accurate information on income and debt, either because of respondents' vagueness or unwillingness to divulge certain details, particularly in a close-knit community. I spent a lot of time discussing with the survey research assistants how to ask respondents about informal businesses. Although a number of these were listed in the completed questionnaires, I do not think the survey results reflect either the variety of such income-generating strategies or the degree to which they supplement household incomes. Part of the problem lies in the fact that such income is sporadic and therefore difficult to track and quantify. For instance, I knew of a number of people who kept one or more pigs and chickens, and who would periodically slaughter them and sell portions of meat in the village. Many women also earned additional income working as seamstresses, hair stylists, caregivers and washerwomen.

⁴⁸ The total number of households is based on the property listings acquired from Ngqushwa municipality. According to the surnames on this list, there are 496 Xhosa households and 70 non-Xhosa households in total. The list is not entirely accurate, because some of the listed property owners have died or moved away and the plots have been left vacant. There are also a number of informal properties that are not listed. Out of the 310 households included in our HHEH Survey 2005, 296 were Xhosa and 14 non-Xhosa.

In hindsight, there are certain modifications I would have made to the questionnaire; for instance, including additional items in Question 3 (household costs), such as school fees, uniforms and supplies; clothing and personal supplies; entertainment; and medical costs. In addition, I would have paid more attention to debt. Question 3 includes a section for monthly payments to hire purchase plans and shop accounts, as well as a section for specific debts (water, rent, funeral insurance, other). However, it became clear to me, through conversations and interviews, that there are important areas of expenditure and debt which the survey data do not reflect. For instance, one interviewee, who was talking about the different ways people choose to spend their money, noted that some men who work as labourers in Hamburg, earning about R200 (\$40) a week, can't afford to eat properly, because most of the money is used to pay off drinks they've bought on credit during the week at the local shebeens. A lot of people also have an open account at Mrs. Mei's general dealer store—a fact that is not reflected in the survey results.

The research assistants ran into very few difficulties during their work; most people gave generously of their time to participate in the survey. Our team encountered more resistance in Emagqubeni than any other neighbourhood, and were reluctant to approach some of the white homeowners. Although the survey extended into the holiday season, many homeowners in Emagqubeni were not in Hamburg at the time. We therefore only have completed questionnaires from 14 non-Xhosa households, compared to 296 Xhosa households (as noted above, there are a total of 70 non-Xhosa households listed in Hamburg). Although the non-Xhosa sample is too small to be statistically

representative, it still gives a good idea of some of the disparities between Xhosa and non-Xhosa households in the community, particularly in terms of income.

Interviews

Over the course of six months, I conducted 31 formal, semi-structured interviews with 24 interviewees (see Appendix 6). The interviews were conducted in the interviewees' place of choice (usually their homes). All interviewees signed a consent form, available in either English or Xhosa (see Appendix 7). In cases where the interviewee did not speak English or was more comfortable speaking Xhosa, Liberty accompanied me and acted as an interpreter. All of the interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed and, where necessary, translated by Liberty from Xhosa into English⁴⁹. Adapting my original interview guides to my new topic, I designed three new guides: one to gather general information about the organization of funerals, their cost, and changes compared to the past (Funeral Interview Guide IA); the second to collect gender-specific information, namely on women's work groups, buying/credit clubs and *manyanos* (Funeral Interview Guide IB); and the third to gather people's impressions of Hamburg in previous decades (History of Hamburg Interview Guide) (see Appendix 8). In the case of the funeral-related interviews, Liberty and I always gave prospective interviewees a rough idea of the kinds of questions we would be asking to make sure they felt comfortable enough to discuss the topic. If, at any point during the interview, an interviewee seemed upset or uncomfortable, I would steer the conversation in a different direction.

⁴⁹ Throughout the thesis, I indicate those interview excerpts that are translations from the original Xhosa.

Six people were approached for interviews on the history of Hamburg, two of them non-Xhosa. Out of these six, two spoke to me about funerals as well. The remaining interviewees (for whom I used Interview Guides IA, or IA and IB) were all Xhosa and had had at least one death in the family in the previous ten years. I aimed for broad representation in terms of the family's economic situation and the cause and age of death of the family member(s) in order to see how these factors might influence the type of funeral that was held. On the basis of these criteria, Liberty and I identified some potential interview candidates from our initial survey results. Most of my interviewees, however, were people with whom I had formed some kind of relationship during my initial months in Hamburg.

Participant observation

In the course of my fieldwork, I attended six funerals in and around Hamburg, six prayer meetings, three women's *manyano* meetings, five church services (Methodist, Seventh Day Adventist and Zion), three traditional ceremonies to commemorate the death of a household head, and one beer drink. I was given permission to make audio recordings of all the women's *manyano* meetings and to film one funeral in its entirety, including a week of preparations and two prayer meetings. As a result of my filming, I was closely involved in the preparations for this funeral, which included making trips to East London and King William's Town to buy groceries and supplies; visiting the funeral parlour in Peddie to select the coffin and finalize details for the service; cleaning and fixing up the house; preparing and serving food to visitors; making a trip to the forest for firewood; and collecting chairs from the local school. My participation in all of these

activities above was severely curtailed by my inability to understand or speak Xhosa. Although people were very inclusive, I could only ever get a sense of what was going on through notes and/or running commentary provided by Liberty and other patient companions. Xhosa is a complicated language and my skills did not advance much beyond being able to manage basic greetings and getting the drift of a conversation by picking out key words. I was keenly aware of the wealth of information that was eluding me (cf. Owusu 1978).

Audio and video recordings

It was in part to compensate for my lack of proficiency in Xhosa that I decided to ask certain families for permission to make audio and video recordings. I had fairly strong reservations about bringing recording equipment into the private and emotionally charged space of mourning. The more funerals I attended, however, the more I realized that Xhosa notions regarding the space of death and grieving were very different from my own. In my experience, death has always been private and taboo—a space to which (other than on the funeral day itself), only close family members and friends are admitted. In Xhosa and other African cultures (e.g. de Witte 2002, Smith 2004), however, death is a very public affair. As I describe in Chapter Four, the participation of *lots* of people in all the activities leading up to and following a funeral, spanning a period of several weeks, is not only desirable; it is considered a vital part of overcoming the loss and bringing closure to the family. For many, making a video-recording of the funeral day has become an important part of the commemorative process. I remember being quite surprised, at some of the first funerals I attended, seeing people with camcorders making no effort to

remain unobtrusive, but on the contrary, moving front and centre to get close-up shots of the speakers, the coffin and the choir. Similarly, taking photographs of all aspects of the ceremony, including the lowering of the coffin into the grave, did not seem to be in the least bit taboo.

Although I never overcame my feeling that there are some places a camera, in particular, shouldn't go, I did eventually ask two families for permission to record the women's *manyano* meetings, and one family to film an entire funeral, on the understanding I would edit the footage and make a tape for them. Graeme, Robert and Justus Hofmeyr very generously lent me their video cameras, and Carol Hofmeyr allowed me to use a television and VCR belonging to The Keiskamma Trust in order to view the recorded material. I employed my friends Lindiwe Cuka and Zukiswa Pakama to transcribe and translate some six hours of audiotaped material and fourteen hours of video footage. They did a fantastic job, for which I am extremely grateful. Reading through the translations I felt, for the first time, that I was really participating in these events, albeit after the fact.

Documentation and consultation

I made monthly visits to the libraries at Rhodes University in Grahamstown to gather documentation on funerals and the Eastern Cape/former Ciskei region. I also did archival research at the Amathole Museum in King William's Town. I consulted briefly with Andrew Ainslie, a lecturer at Rhodes University, who was completing his Ph.D. thesis on the ways in which cattle are materially and discursively enmeshed in people's livelihoods in Hamburg and the nearby village of Lover's Twist (Ainslie 2005). I have

found his work particularly valuable as a source of contextual information and as a reference against which to check my own ethnographic data. As I will describe in Chapters Five and Six, Ainslie's (2005) discussion of the Xhosa cultural norms of *masincedisane* ("let us help each other") and *ukwakh'umzi* ("building the homestead") (cf. McAllister 1986, 2001) deepened my understanding of patterns that were emerging in my interview material.

I also consulted with Glen Hollands, the director of Afesis-Corplan, the non-profit organization based in East London that conducted a project promoting tourism in Hamburg (*Pro-Poor Tourism in Hamburg*, 2004). Mr. Hollands generously gave me copies of his organization's latest publications, and invited me to look through the many boxes of documentation he had gathered on Hamburg. Finally, I visited the offices of Ngqushwa Municipality in Hamburg and Peddie to request the property list used for the survey, as well as maps and information on property, rental and water rates.

Correspondence

On my return to Canada, I was fortunate to be able to keep in contact with Zukiswa Pakama who, along with Lindiwe Cuka, had worked long, long hours to transcribe and translate all the video material before I left. Zuki and I continued working together via e-mail. Her help clarifying details, explaining areas that were unclear, and shedding additional light on many aspects of life in Hamburg has been invaluable.

CHAPTER 4

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Switzer (1993:351–6) observes that the Ciskei region offers a history of South Africa in a microcosm. It was the site of the most protracted wars between European colonizers and indigenous Xhosa-speaking peoples; its inhabitants were among the country's first to enter the emerging market economy and the migrant labour force in large numbers; it was the birthplace of African oppositional politics and legendary resistance fighters like Steve Biko; it was the site of South Africa's first non-racial university (Fort Hare); and it was a test ground for what would become the apartheid regime's brutal labour control and resettlement policies. My aim in this chapter is to highlight key aspects of this complex history in order to further contextualize contemporary realities in Hamburg.

The Ciskei Region in the Precolonial Era

From at least the Later Stone Age, the Ciskei region was inhabited by San hunting and foraging groups. Hunters-turned-pastoralists known as Khoikhoi are believed to have started migrating into Southern Africa in the first millennium B.C. The two groups frequently came into conflict (the Khoikhoi eventually pushing the San out of the coastal and inland grazing spots into less hospitable mountainous regions), but also shared extensive trading relationships and similar belief systems, and intermarriage was

common. They are therefore often referred to collectively as the Khoisan (Elphick and Malherbe 1979; Schapera 1930; Switzer 1993:17–22).

From about 3000 BC, tribes of Bantu-speaking farmers, believed to have originated in Central Africa, started slowly migrating southwards. These Iron Age agro-pastoralists reached South Africa by about 200 A.D. and had settled in the coastal lowlands of the Eastern Cape by the seventh century (Switzer 1993:22–24). The family of languages spoken by the group that settled in the east is known as Nguni; Xhosa belongs to the southern branch of this language family, and the tribes that migrated along an inland strip parallel to the east coast have been collectively referred to as the Cape or Southern Nguni (Hammond-Tooke 1965).⁵⁰

A crucial change that took place among these cultivators between 700 and 1200 AD was the shift to surplus cattle production, which had a significant impact on their economy and social structure. Not only did milk products feature more prominently in their diet, but cattle became a valuable commodity and key instrument of social reproduction (Switzer 1993:28–32). They served as bridewealth (*lobolo*): to legalize a marriage, a negotiated number of cattle would have to be transferred from the husband's father's homestead (*umzi*) to the bride's father's homestead. The act symbolized the transfer of rights over the woman and her future children from her father or guardian to her husband's family (Preston-Whyte 1974). Jeff Guy (1987:21–2) describes this “transfer of cattle against the productive and the reproductive capacity of women” as the “dynamic social principle upon which South African pre-capitalist societies were

⁵⁰ The languages of the Northern Nguni are Zulu and Swazi. As Maylam (1986:20–1) and others have observed, the term “Nguni” has come under critical scrutiny as an inaccurate ethnic label used during the 1930s in the context of the South African state's efforts to “retribalize” Africans. As a linguistic rather than ethnic category, however, it remains useful.

founded.” In addition, cattle served as loan capital. Men with larger herds would be in a position to lend cattle to younger men in their descent group seeking to amass sufficient *lobolo* for marriage, or to non-kin ‘clients,’ who would be expected to perform services for their benefactors. This type of patron-client relationship was a common feature of Nguni social economics (Hammond-Tooke 1965; Wilson 1969). Cattle also became prominent in the ritual sphere. They were slaughtered in sacrifices to honour the ancestors and bring health and prosperity to the living; to propitiate the ancestors in times of illness; and to mark important life stages such as circumcision (for men) and marriage. Finally, and importantly, they conferred status—the more cows a man owned, the more wives he could afford to incorporate into his homestead, and the more ties of loyalty he could command through clientship relationships. This resulted in greater stratification between the lineage-based clans, leading to the development of chiefdoms.

By approximately the 14th century, five tribal clusters of Xhosa speakers had settled in the Transkei area: the Mpondo, Mpondomise, Bomvana, Thembu and Xhosa⁵¹ (Hammond-Tooke 1965). Linguistic evidence points to continual and long-standing interaction with Khoi groups already inhabiting the area (Harinck 1969). Two aspects of Xhosa social organization facilitated processes of intensive contact with and eventual absorption of Khoisan groups. The first is the fact that Xhosa nationhood was a political concept, not an ethnic or territorial one—the incorporation of ‘foreigners’ was therefore common practice (Peires 1981; Wilson 1969). The second concerns a ‘built-in’ tendency

⁵¹ Hammond-Tooke (1965:145) defines “tribal cluster” as “a structure of associated tribes, usually genealogically related, but including tributary chiefdoms.” To the original core group of five clusters were added seven more from a second wave of immigration in the early nineteenth century: the Hlubi, Bhele, (ama)Zizi, Bhaca, Xesibe, Ntlangwini and Mfengu. Since Xhosa is the common language shared by all of these clusters as well as the name of one of them, there is some room for confusion. In this thesis, I will be using ‘Xhosa’ to refer to all Xhosa-speaking people.

toward segmentation or fission through the dichotomous ranking of a chief's wives. The chief's first wife (usually a commoner) formed the 'right-hand house.' Her eldest son (the 'right-hand son') was not, however, the legal heir to the chief; this privilege was reserved for the first son of the chief's 'great wife,' usually of royal blood, whom he would marry later on in life. It was therefore expected that the heir of the right-hand house would break away with his followers to establish a separate chiefdom elsewhere. While segmentation this did not occur in every generation, it did happen frequently, particularly towards the end of the seventeenth century (Hammond-Tooke 1965; Peires 1981; Soga 1932, ch. 3).

Some features of precolonial Xhosa society

Xhosa villages consisted of scattered homesteads, each housing the family head and his wife or wives, unmarried children, and sometimes other relatives. Each territory was governed by a chief⁵², who owned land 'in trust,' was in charge of allocating it to his subjects, and would directly enjoy the fruits of their labours. There was no concept of private ownership, but rather of group usage—every (married) adult male was entitled to a portion of land to sustain his household. Peires (1981:27) describes how governance in Xhosa society, up to the highest level, mirrored the organization of the family in the homestead, as captured in the metaphor *ukulawula* (to govern, or to dish out portions from the pot at mealtimes): the paramount chief would 'allocate' each chief his 'dish' (share of land, power), and similarly, the chief, like a father, would dish out privileges to his people. Chiefs were recognized as superior and were entitled to exact tribute and impose fines, but were also expected to protect their people, resolve disputes and help

⁵² Chiefs were subject to paramount chiefs who ruled over several territories.

those in need. There were strong checks and balances on chiefs' powers—namely, the ever-present threat of desertion by his councillors and/or people. Because of the somewhat tenuous position of the chiefs and the essentially redistributive nature of the economy, Xhosa societies never became significantly stratified (Bundy 1979:16–21; Peires 1981:30; Soga 1932:383–5; Switzer 1993:35–8).

There were, however, marked differences in the rights and privileges of different members of the society. Xhosa society was patrilineal, with strictly prescribed relationships, rights and duties in terms of age, seniority and gender, older ranking above younger, men above women. Labour was clearly divided as well: men were exclusively in charge of cattle and hunting, while boys were given the task of herding. Women cultivated crops, gathered firewood, wild fruits and vegetables; fetched water; took care of children and carried out domestic chores. Both sexes engaged in domestic manufacture—men worked in wood and iron, and prepared hides; women made clay pots, wove baskets, did beadwork and sewed. Married women had rights to the land they worked and the crops produced, and they rose in status as they bore children; however, they were excluded from political spheres (Switzer 1993:37). Guy (1987:24–5) describes women in pre-capitalist societies in Southern Africa as a subordinate class, their labour power and reproductive capacities exploited by men. H.J. Simons (1968:187) takes a rather different view, indicating that Western legal categories are not appropriate to assess precolonial African social regulations:

Women had more rights as regards both their person and property than have been conceded to them by alien courts. In any event, the propositions as formulated are misleading when taken out of their social context. Common law terms such as ownership, contract and status itself are saturated with an individualism alien to traditional African culture The family, rather than any individual, had full legal capacity. Each of its members had a clearly defined position with recognized

claims and obligations; but the household constituted an integral whole . . . No woman or man could normally exist outside a domestic group, within which the activities of the sexes were complementary and not in conflict.

The Colonial Era: Unprecedented Contact, Conflict and Change

From the late 15th century, European trading ships were rounding the southernmost tip of Africa en route to Eastern Africa, India and Indonesia. In 1652, the Dutch East India Company established a permanent supply station in what is now Cape Town. Within a few years, some Company officials were released to engage in agriculture. They rapidly encroached on Khoikhoi grazing lands, as well as the hunting grounds of the San. By the 18th century, the Khoikhoi and San in the region had been decimated by warfare and a smallpox epidemic; the survivors either escaped into less hospitable regions or were made indentured labourers (Elphick and Malherbe 1989)⁵³. From 1703, Dutch stockfarmers (trekboers)⁵⁴ began to migrate northwards and eastwards, along the coast. By the 1770s, they were in permanent contact with the Xhosa chiefdoms. Relations between the two groups fluctuated between trade, conflict and cooperation. As Switzer (1993:48) notes, the Xhosa held the upper hand at this juncture, and expected to incorporate the trekboers into their polities, much as they had done with other groups.

Start of the Cape-Xhosa Wars

However, a breakdown in relations soon occurred over control of land in the coveted *zuurveld* region⁵⁵. These hostilities sparked the first of nine ‘frontier’ wars⁵⁶

⁵³ As Armstrong and Worden (1989) describe, until slavery was officially abolished in the Cape Colony in 1834, slaves—imported mainly from the East Indies, India, Ceylon, Madagascar and East Africa—were another important source of labour for the colonists.

⁵⁴ The group that would become known as Afrikaners, who speak Afrikaans.

⁵⁵ Prime “sour grass” grazing land between the Sundays and Fish rivers (Switzer 1993:48).

waged over the course of a century (1779 to 1878)—the most protracted show of resistance against colonial rule in southern Africa. Bundy (1979:31–2) describes the conflict over land and resources as partly a clash of economic systems—British imperialist capitalism, with its voracious appetite for resources and markets, versus the pastoralist economy of the Xhosa, requiring unfettered access to grazing lands. In 1806, the British gained permanent control over the Cape colony, and military interventions against the Xhosa began in earnest. The War of 1811–12 was a show of unprecedented brutality: an armed force of colonial and loyal Khoikhoi troops was ordered into the *zuurveld* region just before the summer harvest, and proceeded to destroy the crops, confiscate cattle, and drive some twenty thousand people off the land (Switzer 1993:51–2).

British Kaffraria

Following the Fifth War of 1818–19, the British declared the area between the Fish and Keiskamma rivers to be a ‘neutral zone’ which neither Europeans nor Xhosa could inhabit⁵⁶. The Xhosa were to remain east of the Keiskamma river in an area that came to be known as British Kaffraria (see Figure 6). In 1820, 5,000 English immigrants, along with a number of missionaries, arrived in the *zuurveld* area where they were encouraged to take up sheep farming. The English presence would become even more dominant in the region from the 1830s, as Dutch-speaking farmers began migrating north

⁵⁶ The frontier tradition in South African historiography has been revised; these wars are therefore more appropriately referred to as the Cape-Xhosa wars (Switzer 1993:52, 375).

⁵⁷ Peires (1989a:483) describes this ‘neutral zone’ to be “one of the hardy minor myths of South African history [Cape Governor] Somerset’s official dispatch on the subject unambiguously refers to the land in question as ‘ceded’ to Great Britain, [and] describes it as ‘as fine a portion of ground as is to be found in any part of the world, and strongly recommends it to the Colonial Secretary as a suitable area for systematic colonization.’”

in what came to be known Great Trek—a powerful symbol of Afrikaner efforts to preserve their culture, shake off the constraints of British rule (particularly those governing “master–servant relations”) and seek out new economic opportunities⁵⁸. Meanwhile, British military and settler groups were invading Xhosa territory at will, stealing cattle, attacking villagers, and burning crops and huts.

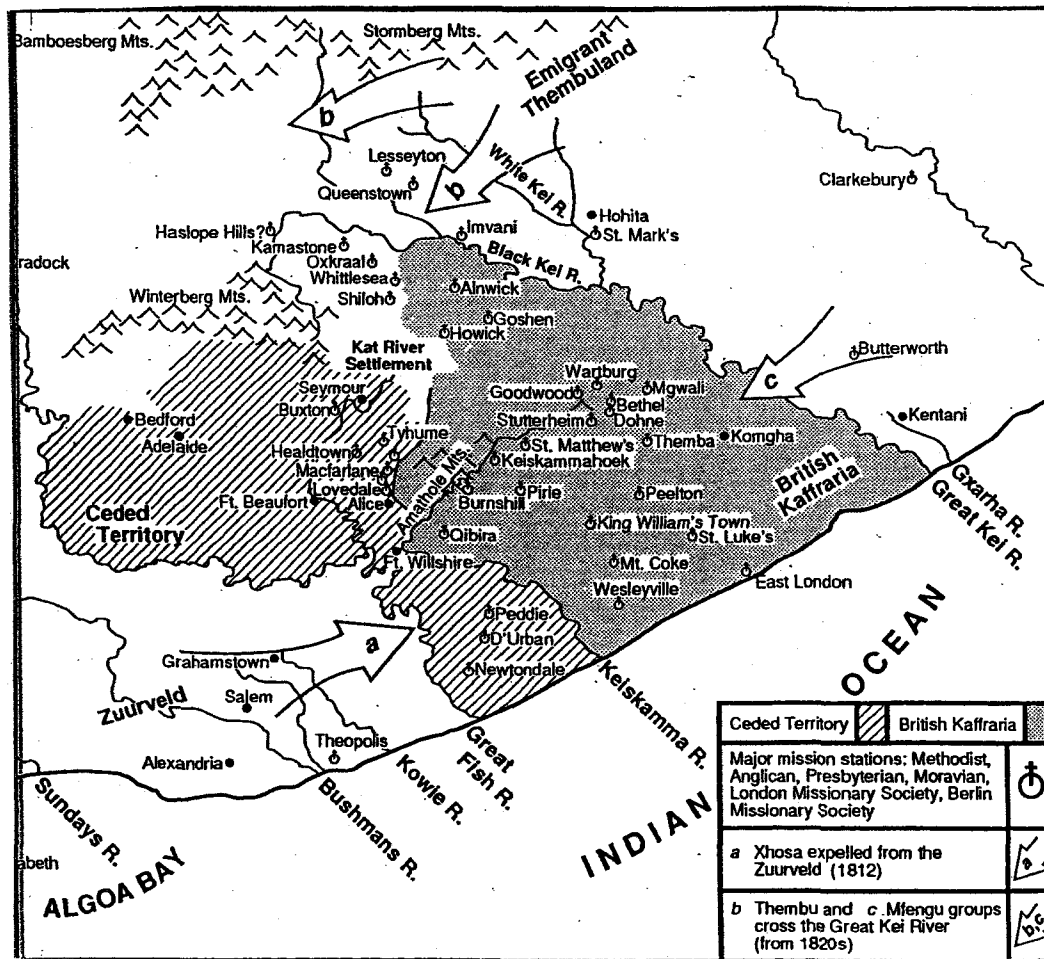


Figure 6 – The Ciskei region in the nineteenth century (Switzer 1993:55)

⁵⁸ Peires (1989a:500) indicates that the emancipation of slaves and other labour reforms in this period were not popular with frontier farmers.

The Mfengu Refugees

Between 1818 and 1828, groups from northern Nguni chiefdoms fled Natal during the military campaigns (known as the Mfecane) of the Zulu King Shaka. These refugees had mostly settled east of the Kei river among the Gcaleka Xhosa, with whom they entered into clientship relationships. The settler version of the Mfengu story emphasizes their ill treatment at the hands of the Gcaleka and their 'deliverance' by Methodist missionary John Ayliff who brought over 16,000 Mfengu to Peddie, west of the Keiskamma river, in 1835. The Mfengu were granted land in the Peddie district (part of the 'ceded territory') to work the land and serve as a buffer between the Cape Colony and the Rharhabe Xhosa (Bundy 1979:32–43). Although aspects of the Mfengu story have been questioned as a colonial fabrication, the group identified as Mfengu was to form a new African elite, which would have important political consequences in the years to come (Moyer 1976; Switzer 1993:56–60). Bundy (1979:34) observes that, as refugees, the Mfengu were often not subject to chiefs and the communal economic ethic. They were therefore far more disposed to enter the colonial market economy, which they had done successfully since their time of refuge among the Gcaleka. Their material success was further facilitated by the land grants they received in 1835 and in later years, as a reward for their collaboration with the British (they fought on the imperial side in three wars between 1846 and 1878). The Mfengu were also among the first to embrace the 'civilizing' ideology of the missionaries (Switzer 1993:92–3, 139–41).

The Cattle-Killing of 1857

Xhosa socioeconomic autonomy and resistance to the colonial onslaught was largely undone by a momentous millennial movement in 1857 known as the Cattle-Killing (vividly described in Zakes Mda's (2000) novel, *The Heart of Redness*). A fifteen-year-old woman named Nongqawuse claimed that the reason for the Xhosa people's continued misfortunes—the latest of which was a severe lungsickness epidemic that by 1855 was killing some 5,000 cattle every month—was contamination of their goods and cattle by witchcraft and the Europeans. The only way to remedy the situation was through a purification ritual. Nongqawuse prophesied that by killing all of their cattle, and destroying or selling their corn and other possessions, the people would inaugurate a new era: the ancestors would rise out of the sea as New People, driving the Europeans back into it (Peires 1989b). The cattle-killing movement caused a great rift in Xhosa society between those who believed in the prophecy and those who did not. As Peires (1989b:165–181) describes, the believers (*amathamba* or “soft ones”) were people who held on to a traditional communalist ethos, whereas the unbelievers (*amagogotya* or “hard ones”) were seen as individualistic and selfish. Many of the unbelievers (the *Mfengu* particularly) were people who had embraced Christianity and were starting to compete in the new market economy. The rift in values resulted in the birth of two folk cultures, dubbed ‘Red’ and ‘School’ by nineteenth-century commentators, that would persist for the next century. Red people (so-called, because of the Xhosa custom of smearing the body with ochre) were seen as more ‘traditional’ and rejected Christianity; School people were those who embraced Christianity, along with European customs and lifestyles (Mayer 1971). However, the believers outnumbered the unbelievers and,

between 1856 and 1857, proceeded to slaughter all of their cattle. By 1857, they were facing mass starvation. Between 20,000 and 30,000 Xhosa died as a result of the cattle-killing, and some 40,000 were finally forced to seek work in the colony. The mission stations, which had previously been struggling to win converts, entered a phase of rapid expansion (Bundy 1979:40–3).

Founding of Hamburg

It was in these tumultuous times that the village of Hamburg came into being. The Keiskamma River marked the eastern boundary of the much disputed ‘ceded territory’ or ‘neutral zone’ that extended south to the Fish River. In 1823, Governor Somerset had proclaimed exclusive right of occupation for the British in this territory, but later allotted land in the central portion to the Mfengu and, along the coast, to the Gqunukwebe (Bergh and Visagie 1985:44). In 1856, the British government decided to settle German mercenaries who had been recruited to fight for Britain in the Crimean War (1854–56) in the frontier zone of the Cape Colony. The strategy was to settle the Germans in sites that were strategically located for defense purposes as well as their potential to become prosperous settlements (Webb 1985). In 1857, over two thousand Germans arrived and were settled across the Ciskei region. Of these, one hundred arrived in Hamburg, so named after the German port from which they had departed. As Schnell (1954:95) recounts:

Hamburg was described as being one of the prettiest settlements in the Victoria district . . . Altogether, the Legionaires were highly satisfied, and indeed they had no cause to complain, for the pleasures of river and sea were added to the beauty and fertility of the station.

The Legionaries did not fare very well as farmers and many soon abandoned their allotments to seek their fortunes elsewhere. They were followed by a second wave of German immigrants, mainly peasants and labourers with their families, who arrived between 1858 and 1859. Five families were sent to Hamburg (Webb 1985). There is little in the way of written accounts of relations between the Germans and the Xhosa. The former bought pigs from their Xhosa neighbours and, in turn, sold tobacco (Westphal 1892). They also lived in the same areas, mainly by the river. As one interviewee recounted, "The first white people were the Germans . . . we were living together with the Germans just along the river, because that was our place for residents."

The 'Mineral Revolution': control of land and labour through segregation

By the mid-nineteenth century, the pastoralist, homestead-based economy of the Xhosa had been almost completely eroded, and they were ineluctably being drawn into the new socioeconomic order through the economic and political losses described above, along with the growing influence of missionaries and traders. Given the limited available land following colonial expropriation, those Xhosa and Mfengu who were fortunate enough to own property had largely shifted from stockfarming to producing agricultural surplus for local markets. Bundy (1979, chs. 2–3) describes how, between 1840 and 1890, a thriving peasant class emerged (particularly among the mission-educated Mfengu). Many of these people enjoyed political rights as well, since the racially-neutral Cape franchise for representative government (established in 1853) was based on a property and income qualification. Besides this more privileged class, however, there

were thousands of Xhosa who, particularly after the cattle-killing tragedy, had been left landless and desperately poor.

The discovery of two rich mineral deposits—diamonds in Kimberley in 1867 and gold on the Witwatersrand in 1886—were to drive colonial economic expansion, and concomitant exploitation and discrimination of Africans, to new heights, laying solid foundations for the notorious apartheid regime that emerged less than a century later. Shortage of labour had always been a problem for the colonists, as Africans consistently chose to remain economically self-sufficient, turning to wage labour only as a short-term expedient. Following the mineral discoveries, both mining and agriculture were clamouring for cheap labour. The Cape Colonial and subsequent Union governments supported this alliance of ‘gold and maize’ (Trapido 1971) by issuing a series of blatantly discriminatory pieces of legislation, designed to force Africans to enter the wage economy en masse as migrant labourers.

The Natives’ Land Act of 1913

In terms foreshadowed by the Glen Grey Act of 1894⁵⁹, The Natives’ Land Act of 1913 laid out ‘scheduled areas’ (7.1% of South Africa’s total land mass) for African occupation. Only in these areas were Africans permitted to own and lease property (Worden 2000:55–7). The reserves were to serve as self-sustaining ‘reservoirs of labour’ for the mining, agricultural, manufacturing and domestic sectors of ‘white’ South Africa, as well as the home base for women and children, the elderly and the disabled. In

⁵⁹ Masterminded by empire builder and Cape prime minister Cecil Rhodes, the Act sought to maintain segregated territories for Africans in the Glen Grey District (Northern Ciskei) and to implement a “one-man-one-lot” principle, which would prevent African farmers from accumulating land and thereby competing with their white counterparts (Switzer 1993:101–6).

essence, they were an indirect subsidy to industry, since low migrant wages were justified as a mere supplement to what were presumed to be adequate agricultural livelihoods (Wolpe 1972). Until the 1930s, there were vigorous attempts to keep African women in the rural areas and out of the cities. The creation of the reserves marked the beginning of a 'separate' development policy. As Hendricks (1990:31) puts it, "the assimilationist ideology of 'civilising the native' was conveniently being replaced by the absurd, yet ideologically-charged, notion that the Africans should be protected from the ominous competition of the Whites and allowed to 'develop along their own lines.'"

Segregationist legislation

Several laws were passed in the 1920s and 1930s to further implement this segregationist ideology⁶⁰. The deleterious effects of these 'beneficent' policies on black people across South Africa rapidly became apparent. The locations in the Ciskei were filled to saturation by 1910; by the 1920s there was widespread overcrowding, soil erosion, and poverty. Far from adequately sustaining themselves, families were suffering from disease and malnutrition, and depended to an ever-increasing degree on migrant labour for survival. By the mid-thirties, about 63% of able-bodied men in the Ciskei were migrant workers, spending periods of nine to 14 months away from their families (Switzer 1993:209–33).

⁶⁰ These included the Native Affairs Act (1920), which established separate administrative structures for Africans in the reserves and urban areas; the Native (Urban Areas) Act (1923), which provided for residential segregation in towns and regulated the influx of workers through pass laws; and the Native Administration Act (1927), aimed at 'retribalizing' Africans under a separate system of customary law by bolstering 'traditional' authorities. Africans in the Cape were exempt from some of these policies until the passing of the 1936 Representation of Natives Act, whereby their common franchise (held since 1839) was removed, and they were forbidden from buying land outside the reserves (Worden 2000:82–90).

African Nationalism: A Swelling Tide of Resistance

African opposition to the discriminatory policies and legislation of the colonialist/Union governments took a variety of forms, fed by numerous currents. It did not begin to coalesce into the nationalist movement embodied by the African National Congress (ANC) until the late 1940s. A distinctively African political culture in South Africa was forged towards the end of the nineteenth century in the Eastern Cape by the Xhosa-speaking elite who had attended missionary schools, enjoyed franchise rights, and had actively participated in the market economy for several decades. The stance of this anti-traditionalist, petty bourgeois class was moderate and integrationist, tending to defer (at least publicly) to white paternalism, and respecting the laws of the colony. They did, however, create important forums for an African political consciousness to take shape. Key, in this regard, were the popular press and grassroots political associations. In 1912, the South African Native National Congress (SANNC)—the precursor to the ANC—was founded as a permanent national organization to represent African political interests, promote African unity, and seek redress for grievances, although its stance and tactics continued to be moderate (Switzer 1993, ch. 6).

Another important element in African resistance in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was the rapid increase in ‘initiated’ or indigenous churches⁶¹. The philosophy defining the original indigenous church movement was known as ‘Ethiopianism,’ inspired by nineteenth-century black American church movements which sought to root Christianity in African soil and develop an Africanist ideology of sociopolitical autonomy. As Beinart and Bundy (1987:15) remark, this message was

⁶¹ These churches are often referred to as ‘independent.’ Pretorius and Jafta (1997:212) prefer the term ‘indigenous’ as it suggests “a desire to be rooted and contextualized in the African soil rather than merely independent of western churches.”

attractive to South Africa's black elite, whose possibilities for political, civic and economic advancement were continually shrinking. The secessionist churches provided one of the few outlets for leaders to realize their ambitions, and for social and political grievances to be aired (Pretorius and Jafta 1997:213; Sundkler 1961:86). The first Ethiopian church was founded in the Transvaal in 1892. In 1896, it became affiliated with the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC), founded in 1816 by former African American slave Bishop Richard Allen with a mission to foster black pride. Through such connections, a number of black South Africans were able to study in the United States, bringing back seminal ideas such as Booker T. Washington's philosophy of self-help and education and, later, Marcus Garvey's race pride program channeled through his Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and "Africa for the Africans" slogan. Leading personalities of the AMEC were also involved in the international Pan-African movement, launched in 1897, in which prominent black South Africans were involved from the beginning (Kuper 1971:433-5; Shepperson 1960).

Ethiopianism in South Africa soon spawned a variety of new churches: by 1904, the movement had garnered a following of some 25,000, arousing white fears of a universal black uprising (Odendaal 1984:23-6; Pretorius and Jafta 1997:214-15). The Witwatersrand also became a magnet for mission organizations from Europe and the US, especially of the revivalist type (Pentecostal, Seventh Day Adventist). Particularly influential was the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion, founded by John Dowie in Zion City, Illinois, in 1896. The Zionist emphasis on healing and the power of faith, along with Pentecostal baptism by the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues, resonated with traditional African spiritual beliefs in the powers of the ancestors and the role they

played in health and illness, well-being and misfortune. There was an explosion in Zionist churches⁶² following the 1913 Land Act and during the interwar period, when living conditions in urban areas were deteriorating and access to land in rural areas diminishing (Pretorius and Jafta 1997:216-220; Sundkler 1961:33).

The urbanization and industrialization that created fertile soil for the explosion of indigenous churches were also laying the foundation for broad-based mass protest movements. Militancy among the new black working class was on the rise, particularly following WWI, when high inflation, static wages and soaring food prices exacerbated an already volatile situation. Inspired by passive resistance campaigns organized by Mahatma Gandhi in protest against discriminatory legislation suffered by South Africa's Indian population⁶³, black mine workers protested against job discrimination, low wages and living conditions in the mine compounds. The period was marked by a rise in unofficial black labour unions across the country. In 1920, the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) was formed, which, at its height, was the most powerful black political organization in the country (Worden 2000:58-61, 96). In the rural areas, localized resistance movements were organized against unpopular forms of state intervention such as council taxes, land registration and cattle dipping programs (Beinart and Bundy 1987).

A number of factors prevented these various strands of resistance from being woven into a strong and coherent nationalist movement until the second half of the twentieth century. At the time of the Union of South Africa (1910), there was much

⁶² Churches with the words "Pentecostal," "Apostolic," "Faith" and "Zion" in their names all fall under the general banner of Zionism (Sundkler 1961:54).

⁶³ Since the 1860s, South Africa had imported indentured labourers from India to work on sugar plantations along the Natal coast (see Richardson 1986, cited in Worden 2000:17).

regional variation in terms of ethnic background, language and experiences of colonial rule, and urbanization and industrialization were not sufficiently advanced for all the groups adversely affected by discriminatory legislation to make common cause. Furthermore, many of the elite leaders of resistance movements and associations were alienated from the masses. This was all to change dramatically with the formation of the Congress Youth League in 1943, whose members included Anton Lembede, Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela (Worden 2000:92–7).

The Apartheid Regime: Separate Development and the ‘Homelands’

The process whereby the racially discriminatory and exploitative policies described above crystallized into apartheid was not as systematic, planned or inevitable as a retrospective summary might suggest. However, from the 1920s on, the elements were certainly in place for such a system to emerge. A key factor was the rise of Afrikaner nationalism, an ideology celebrating racial purity and the resistance of the Afrikaner *volk* (people) against the British, starting with the Great Trek in 1836. Hertzog, whose National Party won the elections in 1924, was a vocal advocate of segregation. In 1934, a splinter group of Hertzog’s National Party—the Gesuiwerde Nasionale Party (‘Purified’ National Party)—was formed under D. F. Malan, which followed a more vehemently anti-British, pro-Afrikaner line. In 1946, the National Party commissioned a group to look into the ‘native question,’ particularly since the war-time boom in manufacturing had led to a massive increase in urbanization and black protest. The resulting Sauer Report recommended a policy of ‘apartheid’ (Afrikaans for ‘apartness’ or ‘separateness’), which involved dividing all South Africans by race, consolidating the

reserves, and controlling more rigorously the influx of Africans to urban areas (Worden 2000:98–106).

It was on the basis of this policy that Malan's National Party won the elections by a slim margin in 1948. Wolpe (1972) observes that although there was a continuity in segregationist policies dating back to the nineteenth century, apartheid was not simply segregation by another name. This more sophisticated social engineering project needs to be seen as part of the secondary industrialization that was taking place in South Africa after the Second World War—a process in which control of cheap, African labour was, perhaps more than ever, at a premium. At the same time, apartheid was the state's response to the reserves' inability to meet social reproduction needs. In a sense, the regime was a balancing act aimed at keeping production levels in the reserves sufficiently low to encourage out-migration, but sufficiently high (at least in theory) to accommodate people not deemed 'useful' in the urban areas. Apartheid didn't always serve capitalist interests; particularly in its later, more repressive phase, it became a huge drain on state finances.

The 1950s saw the passing of new segregationist legislation⁶⁴ and the tightening of 'influx controls' in order to secure sufficient cheap labour in urban areas to serve white interests, while pushing 'non-essential' Africans out of the cities and onto the reserves (Switzer 1993:306). Also passed were laws aimed at promoting 'native' self-government in the reserves through a process of 'retribalization,' and laws suppressing all forms of

⁶⁴ For instance, the Population Registration Act (1950) which classified the population into four racial categories ('Native'—later 'Bantu' or African), Coloured, 'Asiatic' (Indian) and White; the Group Areas Act (1950), which enforced strict residential segregation; and the Natives Resettlement Act (1954), which initiated massive forced removals and resettlement (Worden 2000:108). This legislation was implemented across the board. Several interviewees described to me how Xhosa families who had been living in Town and the area known as Emagqubeni in Hamburg, were forced to move up into the 'location'. As Lilian stated, nobody resisted, because "At that time, a black man was nothing. If a white man say something, you have to do it anyway. That's the way people were living those days."

public dissent and protest. In response, the ANC Youth League produced a Programme of Action in 1949, which called for 'national' freedom and the rejection of all forms of segregation. Between 1951 and 1953, the ANC's membership shot up from 7,000 to 100,000. In 1953, the organization joined with the Congress of Democrats, the Indian Congress Movement and the South African Coloured People's Organization to form the National Congress of People, which drafted the 1955 Freedom Charter, a democratic and non-discriminatory vision for South Africa that would eventually inform the country's new interim constitution in 1994. In 1954, the Federation of South African Women was founded; in 1956 some 26,000 women demonstrated against the pass laws. Rural protests were widespread during this period as well, often reinforced through migrant-worker links to urban political activity (Worden 2000:112–13). By the end of the fifties, a rift had developed between the Africanists and Charterists within the ANC. Seeking to adopt a more rigorous 'Africa for the Africans' line, a new splinter group, the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) was founded in 1959. In 1960, the PAC organized a large peaceful march to a police station in Sharpeville. The police opened fire, killing 69 people and wounding 180 more. South Africa entered the international media spotlight and the United Nations called for sanctions (Lodge 1983:201–30).

Following the Sharpeville Massacre, the government declared a State of Emergency and banned the ANC and PAC. The underground guerilla army Umkhonto we Sizwe (or MK, translated as 'Spear of the Nation') was formed in 1961. In 1964, ANC and MK leaders were sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island for acts of sabotage. In response to international condemnation, the South African government pursued a course of isolationism, ignoring the wave of decolonization throughout the rest

of Africa, and withdrawing from the Commonwealth in 1961. The end of the decade saw the rise of Black Consciousness—a student movement focused on black pride, strongly influenced by the American Civil Rights Movement and writings of Fanon and Senghor. As the economy took a downturn with heightened inflation in the early seventies, black protest movements and worker militancy soared to new heights. In 1976, 15,000 students in Soweto marched in protest against the teaching of half the curriculum in Afrikaans. The police opened fire, killing several students. Widespread revolt ensued and South Africa was subject to growing international condemnation, further fuelled by the murder in 1977 of Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko while under police detention (Lodge 1983:231–61; Worden 2000:128–36).

In this increasingly volatile environment, the government pursued its goal to break up African nationalism and broad-based popular opposition to apartheid through the social and political engineering project of ‘Separate Development’: the creation of linguistically and culturally distinct pseudo-nations on the basis of largely re-invented tribal identities and traditions. As these homelands became ‘independent’, their citizens had to forfeit their South African citizenship. The homeland system was of benefit to a small minority of co-opted chiefs and entrepreneurs, but for the vast majority, it meant more massive upheavals and greater poverty. Between 1960 and 1983, an estimated 3.5 million people were forcibly removed from their homes and relocated (Platzky and Walker 1985). The Ciskei was proclaimed a self-governing homeland in 1973, and Lennox Sebe, head of the CNIP (Ciskei National Independence Party), was elected president through a rigged election (Switzer 1993:330–34).

The Ciskei during its Years of 'Independence' (1981–1994)

From 1972, the apartheid government moved to 'consolidate' the Ciskei by removing people from African locations ("black spots") in the "white corridor," and buying up white-owned land to transfer it to the homeland areas. In 1981, the Ciskei gained 'independence,' although South Africa provided more than 80% of its budget (Switzer 1993:345). Sebe's rule was characterized by a corrupt system of patronage and clientelism and, in the face of rising opposition from ANC supporters, increasing repression. The vast majority of the Ciskei population lived in abject poverty, exacerbated by the fact that the area was targeted by the South African government as a prime dumping ground for 'surplus people.' Although many rural residents, in particular, supported Sebe, because it was the only way to secure housing plots, pension money and local jobs, there was widespread perception of him as a puppet of the South African government (Green and Hirsch 1982). From 1976, there was an upsurge in riots and boycotts spearheaded by the ANC youth league (Switzer 1993:333–37). Opposition to Sebe's regime intensified with the release of Nelson Mandela from prison in February 1990. Less than a month later, Brigadier Oupa Gqozo staged a military coup, taking over the Ciskei government. Gqozo was forced to surrender in March 1994 (Peires 1992).

Difficult transitions: reconstruction and adjustment, post-1994

For the black, and especially African majority, suddenly a new dawn broke. After these masses had cast their votes, they still had nothing in their stomachs and their pockets . . . yet they had a spring in their step because they knew that a new dawn had proclaimed the coming of a bright day. President Thabo Mbeki, 'State of the Nation' address, February 2004 (cited in Roberts 2005:479).

The 1994 elections opened a radically new chapter in the history of South Africa with the promise of a 'better life for all' (Daniel et al. 2005). The hallmarks of its much-lauded 'bloodless revolution' were the Final Constitution of 1996—founded on the values of human dignity, equality, non-racialism and non-sexism—and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1995–1998), mandated to collect testimony on gross violations of human rights during the height of apartheid (1960–1994) in order to facilitate the transition to democracy in a spirit of reconstruction, forgiveness and goodwill. This new nation-building project was encapsulated in the term "Rainbow Nation," coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The phrase captured the imagination of those at home and abroad as a symbol of the 'miracle' of the South African transition to democracy.

Substantial gains have been made since 1994. Inheriting a faltering economy with a bloated bureaucracy, unproductive manufacturing sector, heavily subsidized agriculture, rising deficit and continual outflow of private capital, the ANC embarked on an ambitious program of "growth through redistribution" in its populist Reconstruction and Development (RDP) program. In his 2004 State of the Nation address, President Thabo Mbeki cited the achievements of the ANC in its first decade of government, which included making significant headway in terms of RDP targets such as electrification, piped water, housing and land redistribution (Daniel et al. 2005). However, the country continues to face serious problems, including high rates of unemployment, extreme social inequality, increased dependency on social grants, very high crime rates and one of the worst HIV/AIDS epidemics in the world.

Many see these problems as exacerbated by the ANC government's about-turn in social and fiscal policy in 1996 when it adopted the neoliberal Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy, designed to make South Africa more competitive on the global market and more attractive to foreign investors. While GEAR has created macroeconomic stability and won kudos from organizations like the IMF, it has failed to translate into significant foreign investment or sufficient jobs to absorb new entrants on the job market each year⁶⁵. For many, the ANC has betrayed the socialist spirit of the Freedom Charter in which a lot of members took up the struggle, and has sold out to neoliberal global interests under the banner of TINA ("There Is No Alternative") (Andreasson 2006; Marais 2001; Saul 1999). In putting capital before broad-based development, GEAR has simply succeeded in deracializing class inequalities and fostering the growth of a small black elite, without significantly transforming the lives of the country's most disadvantaged. The ANC's democratic governance has also been called into question; the party has frequently been accused of acting unilaterally and not tolerating dissent (Andreasson 2006; Lodge 2003:254–5; Tomaselli 2003:6–7)⁶⁶. Desai (2002), for instance, documents the government's repressive responses to the growing wave of community protest against unaffordable water and electricity rates, housing costs and evictions, and barriers to higher education. The ANC's response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which I discuss in the concluding chapter, is another case in point. The current situation is accurately summarized by Marais (2001:305–6) as follows:

⁶⁵ As Andreasson (2006:308) indicates, South Africa's GDP growth since 1994 has barely kept pace with population growth. More than 500,000 jobs have been lost since 1996, and official unemployment figures continue to rise. (See, also, Daniel et al. 2005 and Møller 2007).

⁶⁶ Andreasson (2006:303) characterizes the current political situation in South Africa as one of "predatory liberalism": "neo-liberal restructuring of the economy is combined with an increasing willingness by government to assert its authority, to marginalize and delegitimize those critical of its abandonment of inclusive governance."

Despite teething problems, post-apartheid South Africa's most resounding accomplishments reside in the deracialization of the political-institutional realm. Less decisive is the progress in fostering a national basis for consent And much less definitive is the progress made towards deracializing and democratizing the economic system—not just in terms of grand ownership patterns but in the redistribution of opportunities to participate in it . . . and to share more equitably in the surpluses generated.

My aim in this chapter has been to review key points in South Africa's history, particularly those pertaining to the former Ciskei region, in order to contextualize some of the present-day realities in Hamburg described in the previous chapter. The information provided also serves as an important backdrop to the description of black African funeral practices, past and present, which follows.

CHAPTER 5

FUNERALS IN HAMBURG

Lord, when I wander
On this journey filled with sorrows,
Always teach me to say,
“Let Thy will be done.”

When You take away
The thing that I love most,
Teach me humbly to say,
“Let Thy will be done.”

Hymn #239, *Methodist Xhosa Hymn-Book* [Trans.]

Nothemba passed away on Tuesday from diabetes complications. It came as a huge shock; she was only 51. On Thursday afternoon, I went to her house for prayers with Nozolile and Mthunzi. It was freezing cold and about to rain. As we approached the side of the house, I recognized the melody of a beautiful hymn. We entered a small room with women seated on a couch and mats on the right, a couple of men on chairs on the left. Nozolile and I shared an armchair among the women, all of whom were wearing headscarves and blankets or towels around their shoulders. On the wall next to me was a faded photo-poster of a beach, beside it, a collage of cut-out pictures of plants. A lacy white curtain was fluttering in the window. When the hymn drew to a close, Mthunzi stood up and moved to the front by the door. He began to talk, softly at first, soon building up to an impassioned crescendo. The rain began to drum heavily on the tin roof. Mthunzi closed the door and began to pray. Most of the women got down on their hands and knees. They began to weep. Mthunzi continued praying until he, too, had tears in his eyes. He then opened the door and started singing the first verse of a new hymn.

People came and went imperceptibly. As usual, I understood almost nothing of what was being said, but was mesmerized by the cadences of voices, the powerful singing that gives such faith and hope. After the first round of prayers and song, Nothemba's cousin-sister brought in cups of black tea, followed by one of her daughters with a plate of sliced bread and margarine. Everyone drank, ate and chatted. There were jokes and anecdotes—a sense of relief and calm. One of the women on the couch left and an older and young woman came in. The older woman got down on her hands and knees immediately and started praying and crying. Mthunzi spoke again. I began to understand that each time newcomers arrived, he

would repeat the events leading up to Nothemba's death. As the singing and prayers continued, Nozolile and I quietly took our leave.

When a person dies in Hamburg, prayer meetings are held every day for about two weeks until the funeral, which is usually held on a Saturday. Some of these meetings have a more official character—for instance, if the deceased was a church-going woman, the women belonging to her *manyano*⁶⁷ will meet on a Thursday morning for a ceremony to hang their parted member's church uniform on the wall. Every evening, larger numbers of people are expected (particularly on the Wednesday before the funeral, which is “youth night”), but people from the community and nearby villages drop in to pray, sing and talk with family every day, at all hours. It is very important to visit the bereaved, to sympathize with them and encourage them during this period, and is known as *ukudibanisa amehlo*—“to make eyes meet” (Solomon 1986:30).

All of the meetings follow a similar format. The main room of the house is converted into a prayer room: all of the furniture is removed and pictures are taken off the walls. Benches are arranged in pew-like rows. At around seven o'clock, people begin filing in. Somebody with a good voice will start singing a hymn and everyone will follow. A senior man in the family or head of the youth group will lead the meeting with speeches and prayers. Members of the audience are encouraged to stand up in front and speak for the deceased. These speeches are often long and impassioned. The best speakers, I was often told, are the ones who work themselves into a fit of emotion, voices thundering and faces glistening with sweat. Many speakers have a signature style, for instance, one young woman I saw at several youth meetings would start off quietly, gradually speaking louder and louder, faster and faster, her face upturned and eyes

⁶⁷ *Iimanyano* (unions) are prayer groups, affiliated with specific churches (see Chapter Six).

closed, barely pausing to catch her breath. Others, such as the following speaker who introduced a prayer meeting for Nothemba, continually repeated invocatory phrases, almost like a chant:

We are here Lord because you have allowed and agreed, Lord of Peace, you have kept us safe, Good Lord, throughout the year, and now we are under this shelter, Holy Shepherd, King of Kings, Heavenly Lamb. You have been seen in this family, snatching somebody, King of Kings, Mighty One of the City of Judea. No one is asking why you have done that, Good Lord, Mighty One of the City of Judea. It is stated that each one of us will go in his own time, dear Lord, Prince of Peace, Mighty One of the City of Judea. You have taken Mama Nothemba, my Lord, Prince of Peace, from our community, and she has disappeared from among us, Dear Lord, Prince of Peace. Reveal Yourself in this home, dear Lord, Prince of Peace. And I remember the words, Dear Lord, Prince of Peace, in the Book of Revelations 21. It is the fourth verse, and it says that the Lord shall wipe the tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death and weeping, no more pain, for these things have passed away, King of Kings. Reveal Yourself in this home, dear Lord, and be a sweet scent, Good Lord, Prince of Peace. And to her children, Good Lord, who are seated here sorrowfully, Good Lord, Prince of Peace, reveal Yourself, especially to them. Reveal Yourself and wipe the tears from their eyes, Good Lord, Prince of Peace. [Trans.]

A common theme in speeches at the prayer meetings, and in funeral sermons, is the transience of life, the unpredictability of death. Preachers exhort their audiences to be prepared, to make sure their lives are in order (particularly by joining or staying with a church). In the words of one speaker:

We are all going to the grave. Be ready now, for death is coming soon. This woman [Nothemba] is a warrior, she has prepared her own way, Holy Church of God. I want us to be ready; we must be ready, for we are all going. We are visitors on this earth; there is no hope for staying. We are like water spilt on the ground that cannot be gathered again, Holy Church of God. [Trans.]

At the same time, it is important for the speakers to give the grieving family hope, to 'motivate' and 'encourage' them. The young man who led the youth meeting for Nothemba started the evening with the following words:

In this book Hebrews 6, verses 19 to 20, it says, "We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the

curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf” May the Lord bless the reading of this Word, now and forever, Amen. [Trans.]

The audience immediately responded with a hymn. The singing and speaking go hand in hand, one inspiring the other. As one of my interviewees, Thandiswa, observed, “In those sermons, singing lifts the spirit. If we sing very quietly, nobody will get up and preach.” At the beginning of the youth meeting for Nothemba, the leader rebuked his audience for not singing:

Even though this house is packed, I don’t hear the singing. I’m going to sort out this problem. This does not exclude you from leading the song. I know people who sing well in this house. And if you do not sing, I am going to point at you, or I will stop and ask you why you are not singing, my beloved friends. I want us to sing. Let us sing! [Trans.]

He then reiterated the theme of the evening and the fact that others would be expected to come up and say a word:

We are going to talk about hope tonight in this home We’ve come to say that although this incident has happened here, this mother has been taken away, swallowed by death . . . but beyond death, there is hope. We have come to say only that, my beautiful friends, fathers and you mothers. It is going to be difficult to cook a pot and then eat it myself⁶⁸. It is the custom of the stabber to stab an ox and then hand it over to the skimmers to skin it, my beloved friends.⁶⁹ [Trans.]

The audience members quickly obliged, one after another coming to the front to offer words of encouragement to the family, to talk about Nothemba, or to reflect on the theme of hope. This public speaking on behalf of a person who has passed away is known as ‘witnessing.’⁷⁰ The combination of singing and witnessing that occurs over the

⁶⁸ In other words, he has set the theme with a quotation from the Bible; he should not be preaching alone.

⁶⁹ The idea that people know and must perform their respective duties recurred frequently during my discussions with people about funerals. The ‘stabber’ is the *intlabi*, the male head of the household or appointed patrilineal relative who inserts a large knife or spear into the back of the neck of the cow or ox to kill it (Ainslie 2005:234).

⁷⁰ Witnessing (*ukungqina*) has the broader meaning, too, of endorsing a ritual event by attending and sharing in the food and drink on offer (Ainslie 2005:229–30).

improvised, yet almost seamless performance of each prayer meeting is enormously comforting to the grieving family:

Mr. Mkani: It's nice when the people are around you, so you don't keep on dwelling on this [death], even thinking of suicide. You can't be suicidal when you've got a lot of people who are trying to relieve you of this. I found it very comforting, because people are eloquent. They know how to relieve you. Sometimes they say, "Look at me, I had this thing happen to me. And I'm just as strong now. Be strong!" Those are encouraging words.

Thandiswa: The singing, yoh! It relieves, you know, it takes everything, all the pain away. Singing makes them to see light. If it was somebody's son—that person could say, "Yoh, my son's service was very good. People were singing; they were moving!"

After the evening prayer meeting, some friends and relatives will spend the night with the mourning family, reminiscing about the deceased person's life, character, likes and dislikes. The family members are never left alone during this time. A woman who has been widowed will wear a black headscarf low over her eyes and will sit on a mattress in the main bedroom, accompanied by a main mourner, who is usually a close female relative. People will talk to her about the problems she will be facing as a widow. They will reassure her, remarking on her strengths and offering their support (Solomon 1986). She will have everything done for her. As MaDlamini explained, "They accompany you to the toilet, everywhere. You are treated like a baby. If you have to go and wash, somebody is with you—you are never left alone."

These two weeks of prayer meetings are also a time of intense organization and considerable stress. Family members across the country must be contacted and given the funeral date, as must the church leaders if the deceased belonged to a church. Arrangements with the funeral parlor need to be made: the death and funeral date are announced on a local radio station; the family needs to go and choose a coffin and decide

on music, flowers, grave sign, and so on. Preparations for the funeral are discussed: the program, the food, the graveyard site, the service. Trips to East London and Peddie are coordinated to buy groceries, paint, cleaning supplies and new clothes. Nowethu, who lost her husband, described the things that were going through her mind as she was sitting on the mattress:

Nowethu: You'll always have, how can I put it, your second-in-command here next to you, who will always be a family member. You need to tell that person, because at times she doesn't know all your things. You need to find out whether . . . [concerned voice] "Is there food for the people? Are they cooking there in the back? Did you people go and report at the church? Did you report at the *manyano* that this has happened?" I'll say all that to my lieutenant here next to me!

Vanessa: [laughs] Who was your lieutenant?

Nowethu: It was my sister-in-law. I need to discuss with my lieutenant here that, *ghuti*, "Did you people send out the letters to the other families on the other side of Peddie?" And so on and so on, you know. "This afternoon the church people are coming. Is there anything that you've prepared here? Have they baked bread, or have they made scones, is there cool-drinks, is there tea and coffee?" You know? As much as you sit there, but your mind's got to work also, you must help them. Because it's your husband, you want the funeral to be the way that you want it to be.

All the while, family members, with the assistance of friends, relatives and neighbours, are hard at work preparing the house for the funeral. Tasks are clearly divided by gender. The women clean from top to bottom, whitewashing the walls, smearing earthen floors with cow dung, washing windows, sewing curtains, clearing the area around the house. They are also in charge of preparing and serving tea and bread, scones or biscuits and *amarhewu* [a fermented, non-alcoholic maize drink] to visitors, and cooking meals for anyone working at the house, including special meals for church groups (see Figure 7). Young men (relatives and neighbours) chop and transport wood from the bushveld, to be used for cooking meat and vegetables outside in big three-

legged pots⁷¹. Men also fetch benches and chairs from the primary school, along with pots and dishes borrowed from various families. They put up the tent, fix up the kraal and do repairs around the house (see Figure 8). On the Friday afternoon before the funeral, they slaughter an ox, and early on Saturday morning, young men from the family and neighbourhood dig the grave.



Figure 7 – Preparing food for a funeral

⁷¹ Loaves of bread are also baked outside in smaller three-legged pots for the Friday night vigil.



Figure 8 – Putting up the tent

Anyone from the community can attend the prayer meetings and funeral. On the big day, families usually have to cater for several hundred people—the more, the better. As Thandiswa remarked, “If the people are few, it’s a disgrace. Only three cars—it’s not a funeral.” The hearse arrives early on Saturday morning for the ‘welcoming of the body’ ceremony. At Nothemba’s funeral, the Methodist women’s *manyano* were very present in their red-and-white uniforms, singing and slowly accompanying the men bearing the coffin into the prayer room where it was laid on a table and covered with a fresh sheet, with two lit candles on either side. The room was thick with emotion, people sobbing and wiping their eyes. The priest read a passage from the Bible, to try to comfort the bereaved. The men then left the room and the women prayed and said their last words on

behalf of their departed sister. It was time for the body to be exposed for the last time. A family elder opened the coffin lid and a stream of relatives and visitors lined up to enter the room and pay their last respects. Nothemba's daughters and sisters began weeping uncontrollably.

The coffin was then closed and taken outside to be laid on a stand before the people gathered under and around the tent in a circle—men on one side, women on the other, and the women's *manyano* between the two⁷². The immediate family members took their places near the coffin. Close female relatives were wearing thick blankets and black headscarves lowered down over their eyes. Programs were handed out, providing a short obituary and listing the names of the speakers. At every funeral, a pastor or priest from the family's church conducts the service, introducing several speakers who talk about the deceased person's life⁷³. After each speech, a hymn is sung, usually led by women's church groups. Once all the speeches have been made, a person is asked to read the cards on the wreaths around the coffin. The service ends (some three to four hours later) with a concluding sermon from the priest or pastor. As the wind whipped the sides of the tent, and people began opening umbrellas to keep off the sun, the priest at Nothemba's funeral closed the service:

You have your people, Lord, all the time. You keep and help them in all places. When they cross rivers, You are with them. When they are burnt by fires, You are with them. When they are interrogated, You strengthen them. They look up to You, these people of Yours. They thank You, they trust You. Spiritually and in the flesh, I greet you all. What has happened has already happened. Be quiet.

⁷² Funeral services in Hamburg are held outdoors at people's homes, because there are no church buildings.

⁷³ Generally, these speakers are: an age mate (*esokukhula*), who talks about growing up with the deceased; a person who lived in the same neighbourhood (*esokuhlala* or *esobumelwane*); a schoolmate (*esikohweni*); a fellow worker or colleague (*esoamsebenzini*); an in-law, if the person was married; a person who talks about the cause of death (*esokugula*); a fellow church member (*esenkonzo*); and a person who thanks everyone for coming (*esokubulela*). The more involved the deceased was in different associations or clubs (e.g., church, political, sports), the more speakers there will be.

Even if the wound is sore, you must learn to sleep on it⁷⁴. If you want to, touch it, rub it. Sleep on it so as to be familiar with the situation. This is not the first time here in this home. It is all over the world, in all homes. It is a bitter cup, but when it is your turn, you must take a sip and swallow . . . Go with us, good Lord. We have talked about her as she lays here; we are glad she is going to eternal rest. Stay with us Lord and keep safe those who have come from far away . . . who have not slept, day and night, but have driven to this place. Stay in this house, good Lord . . . Amen. [Trans.]

The coffin was then put in the hearse and a train of cars and people made their way to the graveyard. The priest gave another sermon, followed by singing. Last words were said by a member of the women's *manyano*, and the coffin was lowered into the grave. Family members stood in line to take a handful of soil and throw it onto the coffin as a final goodbye (*ukuphosa umhlaba ethuneni*). People then made their way back to the home. Everyone had to wash their hands (*ukuhlamba izandla*) in bowls of water placed at the gate of the home before going in and taking their seats⁷⁵. A family member seated at a small table near the gate collected money and wrote down the names and amounts in a book. The women and girls of the family, with the help of female relatives and neighbours, were busy at work dishing up plates of meat, carrots, cabbage, potatoes and curry-bean salad for the guests, who, after Nothemba's immediate family, were served in order of gender (men first) and seniority. The atmosphere lightened as people sat in groups, eating and chatting, catching up with friends and relatives.

Once the guests leave, senior relatives and neighbours hold the *ukuyalwa* ("instructions") ceremony, where they call the family members into a room and offer them words of encouragement and guidance. They instruct them on how to behave—for

⁷⁴ These are three common expressions of condolence in Xhosa: *akahlanga lungehlanga* ("what has happened now has happened before"); *tutwini* ("be quiet, don't cry"); *lala ngenxeba* ("sleep on the wound"—resign yourself to the pain).

⁷⁵ This act completes the separation with the deceased and ensures that none of the pollution of death enters the home (Solomon 1986).

instance, not to engage in sexual activity, drink alcohol, get into fights, or do anything that would shame the family. They are told how long the mourning period will last, what to wear and what rituals to perform. The following morning, in some families, members shave their heads, although this practice is falling out of favour, particularly with young people. The sisters, aunts and close relatives of the deceased wash all his or her clothes and bedding. The older clothes are burned and the good ones are put away, to be given to relatives after six months to a year. The “drinking of water” ceremony (*ukusezwa* or *ukuphuza amanzi*) is held on this day as well. A sheep or goat is slaughtered and some families brew traditional beer⁷⁶. One or two days after the funeral of a married household head, the *ukunxiba izila* (“to put on mourning clothes”) ceremony is held for his widow. Older women will bring her a black or navy blue mourning dress (*izila*), and will instruct her on how to behave during her mourning period (she is not supposed to participate in parties or go to church, but is only permitted to work; she must maintain a quiet, subdued demeanour and cannot be seen with other men). Widows are expected to mourn for a full year⁷⁷. Men are only required to wear a black button on their shirt or jacket for a short time. The bereaved family is not supposed to leave the house for at least a week. After this time, the *umcela-tyiwa* (“to ask for salt”) ceremony is held, after which family members are able to resume their normal activities.

The funeral and accompanying ceremonies described above are just part of a longer continuum of mortuary ceremonies (cf. Ainslie 2005:239). When a male household head dies, the family should hold two further ceremonies—*ukukhapa* (which

⁷⁶ Another expression of condolence in Xhosa is *sela amanzi uxole* (“drink water and be consoled (at peace)”). Another name for the *ukusezwa amanzi* ceremony is *ibhokwe yamanzi* (“goat of water”).

⁷⁷ The mourning period is not as long if a woman is a twin, has given birth to twins, or was born after twins. Sangomas (traditional healers) do not have to wear mourning clothes.

means to accompany) is usually held a year after the death, and *ukubuyisa* (to bring the spirit back to the homestead) is held a few years later. Both ceremonies require the slaughter of an ox and the brewing of large amounts of African beer (*mqombothi*), and again, everyone in the community is invited. When a widow's year-long mourning period is over, there is a ceremony to take off her mourning dress (*ukukhulula izila*) (cf. McAllister 1986). Some families might elect to buy a tombstone for a deceased member—the unveiling of the tombstone is another ceremony to which people are invited. Although all of these ceremonies follow a similar format, there is obviously a degree of variation from family to family, depending on tastes, church affiliation and available resources.⁷⁸ In all cases, however, death is a costly affair. The funeral is the most expensive, labour-intensive and stressful ceremony of all, putting a huge financial burden on families, many of whom can ill afford the cost.

The cost of dying

Nofundile: “Now it’s difficult. You only pay for food; you can’t buy yourself shoes. You just buy food and pay the burial society.” [Trans.]

Appendix 9 shows the average costs of the various elements required for a funeral. In total, a ‘proper’ funeral, which includes the slaughter of an ox, costs something in the region of R15,000 (approximately \$3,000 at the time of my fieldwork). In a community where 109 out of 296 households (37%) are entirely dependent on social welfare assistance for survival, and the average household income is R1,985 (\$379) (for an average of 3.5 members), this amount is astronomical. At the very least, a family will

⁷⁸ Some Christian families do not conduct the *ukukhapa* and *ukubuyisa* rituals; rather, they will hold an unveiling of the tombstone ceremony a certain time after the funeral.

have to spend roughly R1,000 (\$200) on a coffin. As one interviewee, Xola, put it, “To me, a thousand rand is like a million rand, because it’s very hard for me to get a thousand rand.” As described in the introduction, it was the enormous discrepancy between the amount Nolumanyano’s family spent on their mother’s funeral (R22,000) and the stable, but not necessarily permanent monthly income in her household (R2,780 a month, R442 after expenses) that prompted me to shift the parameters of my research from health and household economics to funerals, in order to better understand why—particularly in the face of the AIDS epidemic—people found it important, even necessary, to spend such huge amounts. Although some of the people I interviewed were far better-resourced than others, all found funerals to be an onerous financial burden.

To rapidly mobilize the sums required to cover these expenses, people have devised a variety of strategies, the first of which is to purchase funeral insurance. Those few who are fortunate enough to have regular, stable employment often have funeral insurance included in their job benefits. Others purchase plans from banks, the post office, or major insurance companies. The vast majority, however, join plans offered by one of the ten-odd funeral parlors in Peddie and/or one of Hamburg’s two informal burial clubs—The Ocean Burial Society and The Hamburg Burial Society. Out of the 296 Xhosa households that participated in the HHEH Survey 2005, 195 (66%) had some form of funeral insurance. Of these 195 households, 80 (41%) had a plan from a funeral parlour in Peddie; 84 (43%) belonged to the Ocean Burial Society; and 5 (3%) belonged to the Hamburg Burial Society⁷⁹. As shown in Appendix 10, the funeral parlours offer a variety of insurance packages for monthly premiums ranging from R15 (\$3) to R100 (\$20). The basic services covered by all include a coffin, mortuary storage and transport

⁷⁹ No survey respondents or interviewees mentioned having any type of insurance other than funeral.

in a hearse. Most offer a full graveyard service as well, which includes mats, a lowering device and a stand for the coffin. For those who can afford it, there are a variety of additions, including a PA system with music, wreaths (ranging in price from R15 to R450 (\$3 to \$90)), and a grave tent and arc decorated with flowers and ribbons. A steel casket can cost several thousand rand (the most expensive we saw was R14,000 (\$2,800)), and special graves range in price between R3,800 and R15,000 (\$760 and \$3,000). According to an employee at one of the parlours Liberty and I visited, most people opt for basic coverage, at an average monthly cost of R50 to R70 (in our HHEH Survey 2005, the average monthly amount spent on funeral insurance was R62 (\$12)).

The Ocean Burial Society was founded in 1995 by a small group of people returning to Hamburg for retirement, after spending most of their working lives in the city of Port Elizabeth. Like the funeral parlors, the society has a joining fee of R50 and a three-month waiting period before a person becomes a full member (at the time of my fieldwork, there were 150 paid-up members). The important difference is that the club works on a contingency basis: members only have to pay in R30 (\$6) when another member has a death in the family. In this way, approximately R3,500 (\$700) is raised for each funeral. The society also has an agreement with one of the funeral parlours in Peddie (Nontshinga) whereby members can purchase a coffin at a discount price of R900 (\$180). Members who are unable to pay in their R30 when the time comes are given three chances to pay off their debt over a certain period, following which they are struck off the membership list. The society is run by a chairperson, secretary and treasurer, and meets once a month to encourage members in default and to raise extra funds used to purchase items such as marquee tents, chairs and plates, to be rented out for funerals and other

occasions. At the time of my fieldwork, the Society had two tents, which they rented for R250 (\$50) to non-members.

Another important part of the financing of funerals are local buying or mutual aid clubs known as *imigalelo* (from *ukugalela*, 'to pour'), *oorhuqa* (from *ukurhuqa* to 'drag' or 'bring along'), or *imibutho* (*umbutho* sing., which means 'organization') (see Appendix 11). These clubs are run almost entirely by women. There are no particular restrictions on membership, other than financial reliability. They do not quite fit the definition of a rotating credit association (cf. Ardener 1964), because payments are generally not made at regular intervals. Rather, like the Ocean Burial society, they work on a contingency basis: whenever the family of a member has a funeral, they are entitled to the pay-out of the club—the pooled contributions of all members in cash and goods. Not all of the clubs are used for funerals; Masakhane ("let us build each other"), for instance, is a liquor club used for parties or mortuary rituals like *ukukhapa* or *ukubuyisa*. The funeral buying clubs all operate along similar lines. In Masiphekisane, for instance, when one member is holding a funeral, each of the others is expected to contribute a specific food item plus R10 (\$2). The groceries and contributions are carefully recorded. Each member can expect to receive, when it is her turn to hold a funeral, exactly the same items she contributed to fellow members. As Nowethu explained:

What we usually do, Nessa, is that we keep *irecords*. You gave me sugar, so-and-so gave me flour. So, when we are going to you now, they'll have a meeting and they'll check on the books. "What did Nessa buy for Nowethu? She bought sugar. So Nowethu, you must buy sugar for Nessa." Because what happens, people tend to buy the cheapest things. They run away from the sugar—sugar is very expensive, it's R65 (\$13) for 12,5 kg. So people would rather buy samp and flour and potatoes. Then you sit with about six bags of potatoes and only one sugar, and yet the sugar you use so much, because it's in and out with the people, the coffees and the whatnot that you've got to make.

Members of the *isibane* (“light”, “candle”) clubs will contribute R20 for a fellow member’s funeral, so about R600 (\$120) is raised for the family⁸⁰. The drinks clubs similarly provide cases of soft drinks. These clubs not only help offset the cost of food and beverages for the event; they also facilitate logistics, as the family won’t have to organize transportation of all the items from Peddie or East London. As I will describe in detail in the following chapter, the clubs are also important sites of sociality and empowerment for women.

The third option families have to raise money is to approach members of the extended family. It is understood that those relatives who can help should, and will, contribute either money, goods or an animal for slaughtering. The poorest among the people I interviewed had no choice but to turn to relatives. In one case, the entire funeral was paid for by a sister-in-law who works as a nurse. People will also approach their employers for help. A certain amount of money is raised through donations as well. At the prayer meetings, a plate is handed round and, as mentioned above, on the day of the funeral a person is usually stationed at a table near the gate to collect donations and record names and amounts. Lastly, people will borrow money from friends or relatives (one interviewee borrowed R900 (\$180) from a brother to pay for a coffin); buy foodstuffs on credit from the local general dealer’s; use existing lay-by schemes at stores in Peddie or East London to pay for clothing and other supplies; and make arrangements with the funeral parlor to repay costs in monthly installments.

Funerals are a source of considerable stress even to better-resourced families that have safeguards in place (37 households out of the 195 with funeral insurance (19%))

⁸⁰ *Isibane* also refers to money collected at the prayer meetings for the bereaved family to buy food and candles, to dispel the darkness of death.

belonged to at least one grocery club as well). As the quote at the beginning of this section would suggest, funeral insurance has become a necessary household expenditure. The statistics from our survey bear this out: roughly a quarter of the 195 households with funeral plans spent at least 21% of their monthly groceries budget on insurance. For those who can barely afford to put food on the table, funeral insurance is out of the question and the stress of a death in the family is that much more acute:

Xola: I was left with the preparations for the funeral. It took me two weeks to prepare, because it is not that easy, especially these days, to bury a member of your family. Money. Because all I do is work in the gardens. What I get from there is something to buy mealie meal and paraffin and a little bit of sugar for living until you're close to the month end. What am I going to do?

Although, as I shall describe in Chapter Seven, many of the people I interviewed were highly critical of the cost of funerals and the burden they put on families, they all felt the expense was unavoidable. One of the women dishing out food at Nothemba's funeral simply shrugged and said, "It's our culture—we can't run away from it."

Xhosa funeral practices: change and continuity

Nothozamile: This thing of delicious food is new, and it makes people's life hard. [Trans.]

Precious: In our fathers' time, we used to eat dry mealies. You wash your hands there outside, come inside and get a handful of dry mealies. Now, if you don't have a cow, you can't be buried. [Trans.]

Spending a lot on funerals is a fairly recent trend in Hamburg. Several interviewees remembered funerals when they were young as being very simple affairs.

As Xola (born in 1957) recalled:

Xola: Before, when we were still youngsters, we didn't know about these funeral parlours . . . mostly the funeral parlours were used by whites during those times. If somebody died today, the body was washed and wrapped in sheets. Then they would go to the Post Office to send telegrams to all the family members, to tell that somebody has passed away. The next day, the coffins were sold here in the shops—there were two shops here. They used to keep coffins there in their garage. Then people would go there, buy the coffin, and buy the black cloth to cover the coffin, and some they decorate it with a white cross on top. Then early on the third day, that person was buried. They used to cook *inkobe* [dry mealies] and drink black coffee or tea or *amarhewu*, and eat *rostili* [roasted bread]. There was no fat used, nothing that was fat was used during those days. Then they buried that somebody and after that, everything was over. When the family members come, whoever comes, there is one family member who is going to take them to show where the grave is, and do what is done when somebody wasn't there at the funeral. We put a stone. You go there to put a stone (*ukubeka ilitye*).

Vanessa: So the family members would come at different times?

Xola: Yes, when they missed the funeral.

Vanessa: And that was it?

Xola: That was it. There were not these expenses that we are experiencing now.

Soga's (1932:319–20) description of death and burial in 'traditional' Xhosa society gives an idea of attitudes and practices in a more distant past:

The fear of death is very real, not on the part of the dying person, but, because of its great mystery, on those watching beside the death-bed. When the last flicker of life is still in the body most of those present leave the hut, and the women immediately begin their loud wailing for the dead. It sometimes happens that the dying person hears this, and asks those who may yet be near him to put a stop to it. The death wail is kept up for only a short time. It seems to be partly an indication of sorrow, and partly an intimation to neighbours that death has occurred [The body] is wrapped in its blanket, and taken to the grave for burial. Four men, usually, are appointed to carry the corpse to its last resting place. These immediately divest themselves of all clothes so that these articles may not be contaminated by the dead, for as soon as the corpse is touched, the persons so doing and all that they have on is accounted unclean, and must immediately after the burial be rendered naturally and ceremonially clean by washing in the nearest running river. No religious ceremony takes place at the grave, and no words of condolence or sympathy are uttered. A precatory sentence, however, is often addressed to the departed, such as "remember us for good from the place to which you have gone."

According to traditional Xhosa beliefs (which are still widely held), the soul of a deceased person would continue to live, eventually taking its place (after the appropriate

ceremonies) among the ancestors. The afterlife was seen as an ideal version of life on earth. The corpse (particularly that of a household head) would be buried with personal belongings (e.g., an assegai, a bag of seeds, tobacco, a pipe and clothing) for his protection, future food supply and pleasure in the afterlife (Soga 1932:320; Zide 1984:54). The place and position of burial would depend on the position of the person in society and the cause of death. For instance, a household head who died of natural causes would be buried at the entrance to the kraal, facing the home to bring it good fortune and ward off evil influences. In contrast, a person who died a violent or unnatural death would be buried facing away from the home to avoid similar occurrences in the future (Soga 1932:320–1).

What emerges strongly from descriptions such as Soga's (1932) is the degree to which death was a source of pollution and fear, subject to a variety of taboos and cleansing rituals. The corpse was never shown to people, children were not allowed to attend funerals, and only men would shovel earth into the grave following the ceremony. In addition to washing themselves in the river after the funeral, those who had been in close contact with the dead were ritually cleansed with purifying medicine, and family members would shave their heads. Women who had miscarried or lost a child would wear a charm (*ikhubalo*). If they approached a field they would have to chew the charm and spit on the ground so as not to contaminate it. After the death of a husband or child, a woman could not cook until beer was brewed, two or three days later, to 'wash the hands'. A widow would be given new blankets by the deceased's heir, and the old ones would be destroyed. She was not allowed to wear ornaments, attend festivals or drink milk until a ritual killing was conducted a year later to 'shake off' death. The huts and

kraal of the deceased were often abandoned or destroyed (Soga 1932:321–24; Zide 1984:63, 74–5).

The slaughtering of animals was an integral part of this process of cleansing and proper completion of the death. Soga (1932:323) notes that among chiefs and wealthier families, it was customary to slaughter a goat or, less frequently, an ox (called an “ox of washing,” *inkomo yokuhlamba*) immediately following the burial as a propitiatory offering to the ancestors and cleansing sacrifice on behalf of those in attendance. When a household head or his mother died, a ceremony called *ukubona umzi* (“to look at the household”) would be held three to six months later: an ox would be slaughtered and relatives and friends would come to share the food and console and encourage the mourning family (Zide 1984:85)⁸¹. As today, an ox would also be slaughtered for both the *ukukhapa* and *ukubuyisa* ceremonies, the first traditionally held immediately after the burial of a household head, and the second one year later.

One can see several echoes of older customs in contemporary funeral practices in Hamburg, for instance, the taboo on drinking milk in tea or coffee in the weeks preceding the funeral, the cleaning of the house from top to bottom, the washing of hands at the gate after the burial, the washing of the deceased’s clothes, the shaving of heads, the period of seclusion and abstinence for the family, the ‘drinking of water’ ceremony and the release of mourning ceremony for widows. However, the slaughter of an ox immediately following the burial (the custom for wealthier families as described by Soga above) was virtually unheard of just a few decades ago. Some interviewees recalled the first time a cow was slaughtered for a funeral in Hamburg as being in the late 1950s. The idea of

⁸¹ Solomon (1986:46–7) describes this ceremony as one held for a chief’s daughter returning to her maternal home to pay respects to her deceased father.

eating meat at a funeral was both foreign and repugnant, as described by Mr. Sangwane, age 73:

Mr. Sangwane: In those days, they were afraid to do a slaughter or to buy a meat. Because they say, “Oh, it shows that we are eating his body.”

Vanessa: So what changed that?

Mr. Sangwane: You see, there were people who were well-educated who told the others, “No, we are making this meat for the funeral. For the people who attend. Other people come from Port Elizabeth, East London, far. And they can’t stay here hungry.” That’s how I think it started.

Even for someone as young as Thandiswa, born in 1970, eating at a funeral seemed inappropriate in the not-too-distant past:

Thandiswa: To be honest with you, I know it for myself, I used to go and say, “I can’t eat.” You know, people used to be . . . like, eating in a funeral, it’s like, “Yoh, I mustn’t!” I mean, we are not free to take food, as if we are just enjoying. But nowadays, people ask for more. They demand it.

It is difficult to know at exactly what point slaughtering a cow or ox and spending relatively lavish amounts on funerals became the established ‘norms’ in Hamburg that they are today, but it is safe to say these changes have only occurred over the past 30-odd years. An important factor, as Xola pointed out to me, was the arrival of funeral parlours in Peddie (Nontshinga was the first in 1985), as this allowed the body to be kept at the mortuary for one or two weeks. Friends and relatives were therefore more likely to travel to Hamburg for the funeral, hence the need to provide more food. The grieving family would also have time to amass the necessary resources to conduct a more elaborate ceremony. Local burial societies and buying clubs for funerals have also been established quite recently: the Ocean Burial Society was founded in 1995, and Nowethu estimated that the women’s clubs she belonged to had been around for nine or ten years⁸².

⁸² Bank (2002:644) reports a sudden growth in women’s informal savings and credit clubs in rural Eastern Cape communities during the 1990s.

Another key factor was the constant stream of information and ideas brought from urban centres back to the rural areas by migrant workers. In his illuminating Ph.D. thesis on the cultural politics of burial in South Africa, Garrey Dennie (1997:207–27) describes how, from as early as 1915, Africans in the Johannesburg area began forming burial societies to finance decent funerals for their dead and avoid the indignities of the racially discriminatory pauper funerals offered by the City Council. Between 1910 and 1915, approximately half of all urban black burials were pauper burials. By 1940, this number had dropped to less than 12 per cent. During the same period, African burial societies, largely organized and run by women, were mushrooming: by the 1930s, there were societies in every province of the country. Urban funerals became increasingly elaborate and costly and, as the burial societies availed themselves of mortuary services (thus extending the mourning period), were attended by growing numbers of people. From the 1920s, African newspapers in Johannesburg reported on huge funeral processions, with mourners sometimes numbering in the thousands (Dennie 1997:207–227).

As the state became more racially discriminatory and repressive under apartheid, funerals became highly politicized. Dennie (1997:229–407) describes how the funeral held to commemorate the men, women and children who lost their lives in the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960 was the first politicized mass funeral to be held in apartheid South Africa. It was shortly after Sharpeville that the liberation movement decided to take up the armed struggle against the government. It was in the wake of the killing of students in Soweto in 1976, that the mass funeral became a permanent, powerful feature of the political landscape:

Whereas the mass politicized funeral of March 30, 1960 took place peacefully, the mass politicized funerals of the victims of 1976 became intense and violent

confrontations between South Africa's police forces and the mourning children. And whereas in 1960, the mass politicized funeral briefly appeared, then disappeared, after June 1976, it did not. Instead, the mass politicized funeral became a weapon of choice as Black South African mourners wove their pain of bereavement into a fabric of political resistance to apartheid. Indeed, as the Soweto Revolt became a nation wide confrontation between the government and Black students, the mass funeral, born in Sharpeville but resurrected in Soweto, would itself become a national phenomenon. (Dennie 1997:234)

When student activist and Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko died in police custody on September 12, 1977, at the age of 30, he became the country's most famous political martyr⁸³. His funeral in King William's Town was attended by at least 20,000 mourners and hundreds of thousands gathered at commemorative services held across the country. The political force and implications of this mass funeral, both nationally and internationally, were unparalleled (Dennie 1997:243-4).

In the years that followed, Black funerals in the urban townships essentially became political rallies. As Harriet Ngubane (1978:10, cited in Denie 1997:241) describes:

All Soweto funerals became large scale affairs, and what was displayed at them was . . . collective solidarity and indignation. Attendance at them was no longer a gesture of support for bereaved friends and acquaintances but a political gesture. Songs of defiance, often specially composed for the occasion, were sung, and political slogans coined and shouted, accompanied by the raising of clenched fists.

Given the state's banning of all forms of black public protest and funding of political activity, funerals became the most effective vehicles of anti-apartheid protest and political mobilization, organizations funneling money into the 'apolitical' burial societies

⁸³ The circumstances surrounding Biko's death are well-known. As Denie (1997:255) describes, "On 13 September 1977 South Africa's Justice Minister announced to the world that Biko had committed suicide while in police custody. But the government's own pathologist revealed that Biko had died from brain damage sustained from blows to the head. The pathologist also found Biko's body to have sustained broken ribs and contusions consistent with being tortured."

and jockeying for leverage at the public ceremonies. The visibility of funerals, as well as the intense emotion and religious overtones involved, “elevated [the] anti-apartheid struggle from a political commitment to a near sacred imperative,” intensified by the police’s “regular production of new Black corpses” (Dennie 1997:242, 282).

What, in the wake of the anti-apartheid struggle, have the cultural politics of funerals become, with a new enemy in the form of the HIV/AIDS epidemic claiming so many young lives? How do these politics play out in a rural community like Hamburg? Interviewees’ descriptions of funerals in previous decades suggest that they were far more low-key (at least in terms of expense) than the mass politicized urban funerals described by Denie (1997). However, urban funeral practices clearly had (and continue to have) a strong influence in rural areas—as described above, Hamburg’s Ocean Burial Society was founded by migrant workers who had spent most of their adult lives in Port Elizabeth. Interviewees frequently remarked on how current funeral practices are being influenced by the ‘modern ways’ of the city, brought back home by the youth, in particular. Denie (1997) demonstrates how black funerals in South Africa since at least the 1920s have, in their size, visibility and cost, always been political acts—strong statements of defiance and pride against the indignities of colonialism and apartheid. I would argue that they are no less political in today’s postcolonial environment, although the stakes and parameters have significantly shifted. The spending on funerals that is so hotly debated in the press and at the local level has become part of a complex negotiation of ‘cultural’ and national identities—a negotiation that intersects with a rampant HIV/AIDS epidemic and ongoing socioeconomic inequality. In the following chapters, I

aim to explore the cohesive and disruptive elements of this negotiation at the local level
in order to consider the broader implications in my conclusion.

CHAPTER 6

MASINCEDISANE, UKWAKH'UMZI AND WOMEN'S SPACES AT FUNERALS

Vanessa: What does the word *umzi* [homestead] mean?

Mthunzi: It is the family house, a group of family in one house.

Vanessa: How would you like your *umzi* to be?

Mthunzi: First of all, you are not a qualified man if you have an *umzi* without a wife. The aim is to keep the family protected, put commands that will be followed, give a good direction for your family. When you have an *umzi*, you must also be involved in everything that is happening in your village, like neighbourhood problems.

Vanessa: Why?

Mthunzi: That is a good question. It is very important to work closely with people around you, so when you are not home, they watch over what is happening. It's easy to communicate. When there is sickness or death, it is easy for the neighbours to come and help you and calm you down. Even on stages of hunger, because we black people, we are used to borrowing mealie meal from next door, so it's nice to cooperate with your neighbours, so you can know each other and help each other. If there is a problem with money, your neighbour can lend you.

Vanessa: What must you do to ensure your neighbours do this?

Mthunzi: You must be the first to cooperate with them. It is not wise to stay at home looking after your belongings only. It can put you in trouble one day.

In his study of how cattle are practically and discursively enmeshed in people's social and economic lives in the Peddie District, Ainslie (2005) identifies two cultural projects or norms that are key to understanding the dynamics at play: *masincedisane* ("let us help each other") and *ukwakh'umzi* ("to build the homestead"). Variouslly described in the literature as "good neighbourliness" (Hammond-Tooke 1974:361–2), an "ideology of mutual helpfulness" (McAllister 2001:130) and an "ethos of generalised reciprocity" (Bank 1999:409), *masincedisane* is an intricate system of moral and material debts and credits that seemed to permeate just about every aspect of people's lives in Hamburg—

from borrowing a cup of sugar from a neighbour to consoling members of a bereaved family. In Hammond-Tooke's (1974:361-2) terms,

People assist one another, not only because it is the morally right thing to do, or because of the glow of self-satisfaction that comes from knowing that one has behaved correctly. They do so because, if they do not, they themselves may be refused assistance later.

In Mthunzi's explanation cited above, the obligation to make and return gestures of goodwill is very clear. Reprisals for failing to act in a spirit of helpfulness and sharing are equally clear:

Vanessa: What if you don't want to go to someone's funeral?

Mthunzi: If you don't go, they'll punish you. They won't eat or sing at your funeral. It doesn't happen often, but when it does, it's a disgrace When you don't take a plate at a funeral, that can cause you trouble as well. It's O.K. if you're a visitor, but if you stay here, that can put you in trouble. When you have a funeral, they will leave you with your food and everything, wash their hands and go home. Because you are so expensive, so they don't deal with expensive people. The people doing the funeral will say, "Please, people, come, the food is going to go rotten! How can we cook this food for pigs? The pigs are going to get a big Christmas this week!" If someone is sick, no one takes any action to go to that family. When he dies, no one goes to calm down the family. People who come to help are lazy, because they know you are too expensive. Most stay at home washing their clothes, shining their houses

This description closely echoes a case cited by McAllister (2001:132, 136), where an elderly woman who never attended other people's ritual events or ate meat from other homes was duly punished: when it was her turn to hold a ritual, the women in attendance refused to eat the meat, showing their disapproval for their host's prior lack of *isintu* ('human kindness'). Having your family or *umzi* ostracized and neglected by others is a shameful experience to be avoided at all costs. People are therefore constantly cultivating and 'checking' their relationships. The *masincedisane* ethos works hand-in-hand with the *ukwakh'umzi* ideology of 'building' the homestead, which has economic, social and traditional-religious components that are always interrelated (McAllister 1986, 1991,

2001). In his description of the role of beer drinks in a rural Transkei community, McAllister (1986:172) demonstrates how the components work together:

[Every] homestead is under a moral obligation to brew beer for the community (and thus for the shades) at regular intervals . . . The holding of beer drinks is said to “build” the homestead, and “building” has at least three meanings. Firstly, the homestead must be built in a material sense, and the blessings of the shades, secured partly through beer drinks, are needed to ensure successful work-spells, good harvests, healthy herds, etc. So beer is necessary for the economic building of the homestead. Building also has a social meaning, in that by brewing and providing beer for people, the homestead acknowledges its membership of a wider community and makes explicit the values of good neighbourliness and mutual co-operation and affirms its place within a social network upon which it depends for its social and economic existence. As is already obvious, building also has a religious meaning; a homestead is built by doing whatever is necessary to ensure ancestral favour.

The participation of others in this social, economic and religious cultural project is crucial:

It is pleasing to the ancestors for their descendants to ‘build’ the homestead in the economic sense, and it is clear that this would not be possible without relationships with people. As far as the ancestors are concerned, the very presence of people in the homestead is good, the ‘noise’ they make indicates that the homestead exists as a social entity in its relations with others, and it is this that makes beer drinks religious. (McAllister 2001:179)

Clearly *masincedisane* and *ukwakh’umzi* form part of the fabric of everyday life.

It is in the cultural performance of ritual, however, that they are thrown into sharp relief (McAllister 1986:186). It is also in the context of a public dramatization of ‘culture’ that changes are negotiated and continuities reaffirmed. McAllister (1985) describes how, from at least the 1930s, the Gcaleka Xhosa in the Willowvale District of the Transkei applied the *masincedisane* and *ukwakh’umzi* norms in a ritual slaughter for migrant labourers upon their safe return from the mines (such slaughters were previously held to celebrate a safe return from war or a long journey). Killing an animal and sharing the meat with kin and neighbours was seen as a way to obtain the approval of the ancestors

and ensure the migrant's ongoing success. With changes in rural production (smaller homesteads cultivating maize rather than sorghum), increasing migration of men, and dependence on neighbours for agricultural production, the slaughter was gradually replaced by a beer drink. The rationale for the change offered by local actors was that men returning from the mines might be carrying a "snake" familiar⁸⁴, hungry for slaughters; conducting a beer drink would therefore be a way to prevent the returnees from becoming possessed. The purpose of the drink was still to give thanks to the ancestors and obtain their approval, but also, importantly, to ensure that the returnees interpreted their time away "correctly"—speakers stressing the need to return to and build the rural home (as opposed to wasting money in the cities), and to respect the community elders. The threat to the authority of senior men and survival of the community posed by migrant labourers' increasing financial independence and long periods of absence brought about a change in practice expressed in a local idiom of witchcraft. The norms of *masincedisane* and *ukwakh'umzi* remained the same, but were used more pointedly to reinforce the authority of the elders and exert "social control" (McAllister 1985:124) in the face of the very real possibility of the established system coming apart at the seams (see also McAllister 1991).

Some structural factors put more strain on 'traditional' cultural norms than others. Ainslie (2005:223–28) argues that whereas ritual, as described by McAllister (1985), served to affirm existing relations among kin and neighbours in the Willowvale District of the Transkei—where agricultural production was still an important part of daily life—

⁸⁴ McAllister (1985:125–6) explains that this "snake" is *umamlambo*, a familiar associated with male witches: "Gcaleka say that the snake issues instructions to and has control over the 'owner'. If the owner fails to comply with its demands for regular slaughterings, he will become insane. The snake can 'eat' him just as it is able to 'eat' (kill or injure) others."

it performs a rather different function in Peddie District, where agricultural activity has significantly declined since the 1970s, and labour migration has tended to be more local and regional for shorter time periods, making for a stronger focus on household autonomy, commoditization of labour and activities of consumption and social reproduction⁸⁵. Factoring in post-1994 economic conditions, which include high levels of unemployment and casualization of work, along with an ever-growing dependence on social welfare grants, the portrait that emerges is of a “post agrarian, dislocated community” where the values of “good neighbourliness and reciprocal assistance between households and lineages . . . [can] no longer be taken for granted” (Ainslie 2005: 226). In this context, Ainslie argues, ritual serves not to affirm existing social relations, but rather to *enact* them:

[In rural Peddie District] rituals were themselves harnessed to do the work of instructing a specially constituted population, that was ordinarily dislocated and fragmented, how they should act towards each other. Rituals also did the work of defining and redefining kinship, clanship, neighbourliness, in short, community, in relation to the past, the present and the future. (pp. 227–228)

The cooperative agrarian *production* that helped to affirm cultural values in Willowvale District is replaced, in Peddie District, by the cooperative work required for projects of *consumption* in increasingly elaborate and costly rituals. Ainslie (2005:243, 246) identifies growing socio-economic differentiation in a climate of economic uncertainty, along with tense gender and generational relations, as the fault lines of fragmentation and dislocation in communities like Hamburg. In this chapter, I would like to use his work as a starting point to explore, in greater detail, how *masincedisane* and *ukwakh’umzi* inform the production and consumption involved in funerals—in

⁸⁵ For a more detailed discussion of recent economic trends in the Peddie District, see Ainslie (2005:98–135).

Seremetakis' (1991:9) terms, the “embodied acts” and “semantically dense items”—as well as the areas of tension that emerged most strongly during interviews, in commentary that was often at odds with the official ‘cultural script’ followed in the public arena. Like Ainslie, I found gender roles and relations to be a flashpoint for tension in the community, as were generational conflicts, often voiced in an idiom of ‘tradition’ versus ‘modernity’—the former associated with rural life and values, the latter with youth and urban culture. A further point of strain, not explored by Ainslie but obviously closely tied to funerals, was the stigma and increasingly devastating effects of HIV/AIDS.

***Masincedisane* in the context of funerals**

Funerals bring a variety of forms of *masincedisane*, or ‘webs of reciprocity’ into focus. Acts signifying public endorsement of the family and homestead—the attendance of relatives, friends, community members and fellow church goers, as well as their participation through singing, speaking, and eating the food on offer—are vitally important measures of the success of the event (Ainslie 2005:229–30; McAllister 2001).⁸⁶

When I asked one of my interviewees what was important for a proper funeral, she replied:

Nokhuselo: I think if family members and other people attend in numbers, like in my son’s funeral, people were talking good things about him and people were trying to show me that God was responsible for that, because he belonged to Him. And I felt better, because I know we are all visitors on this earth Also the thing I wanted is that those who attended be satisfied, get a meal. Nobody complained about a shortage of food; everybody managed to get the meal. That made me happy. [Trans.]

⁸⁶ Describing a ritual killing (*ukungcamisa*) performed before the circumcision of male initiates, Wilson et al (1952:206) write: “Neighbours, friends and relatives gather to participate in the ritual, for it is said that there is no custom which can be performed without having people present (*akukho siko elinakho kuqhubeka abantu bengekho*).”

The possibility of people not participating in these ways is a source of considerable anxiety, as it would signify a major breach in the social fabric. The anxiety can be great to the point that it temporarily eclipses the grieving process:

Thandiswa: You cross your fingers—are people going to be happy with the meal? I was more conscious about the weather and food than about my father. The people coming are supposed to cry with us, comfort us, take away our pain. Instead we concentrate on entertaining the people rather than the death. If there wasn't this kind of organization, people wouldn't come. If the people are few, it's a disgrace.

As described in the previous chapter, the material contributions of a wide range of people to the organization of a funeral are considerable. In all cases, the *masincedisane* norm is the guiding principle. Whether or not they are written down, all contributions—in the form of labour, money, gifts, groceries and other items—are recorded for future reference. The principle of reciprocity is clear in both the names and *modus operandi* of the grocery clubs, one of which, appropriately enough, is called *Mas'ncedane* (other examples, as listed in Appendix 11, include “Let us cook together,” “Let us build each other” and “Let us carry the burden together”). In all contexts, the rules are clear, as illustrated by Lungiswa's explanation to me of how the neighbourhood women work together in the home of the bereaved family:

If I come to your house to help, I must really help. Because what we usually do, we do the work, and then we sit down for a cup of tea. So, if I come here and just organize a cup of tea and sit down, that's not good. People are looking at me. They are not going to tell me I am wrong. They will never tell me, because I must understand why I am there. I did not come here for fun, I came to help.

As already seen with the grocery clubs, there is a fair amount of flexibility vis-à-vis these rules, provided the person shows proof of good intent. A woman who explains to her fellow club members why she cannot make a given payment is given some breathing space. A neighbour who cannot help with work can find other ways to

contribute. As Lungiswa put it, "If I don't have time to go and help, they are my neighbours, they will understand that. If I've got money, I can send them a 25L of paint—that's my contribution." Mr. Mkani, who was unable to attend the funeral of the daughter of an old man in the village, because he had to attend another funeral of a close relative the same day, told me how he went to explain and apologize to the family, giving them a speech to be read on his behalf.

The threat of punishments for failing to uphold the *masincedisane* norm—for example, Mthunzi's image of the family left with mountains of untouched food—seemed greater than their implementation, although I was assured by everyone I spoke to that such things did happen. Often people who were remiss in their obligations to others were saved by kinship ties. Provided one member of a family has contributed in some way to a bereaved home, the others will probably be let off the hook. Thandiswa described how a family whose sons spend most of their time away from Hamburg working in the cities might nonetheless escape the punishment of young men in the village refusing to help them dig a grave for a deceased family member:

The people who just stay in the townships are not around, so they are not attending anything at all. So it means they have to call their friends from the township to dig the grave, because nobody here will give help. But if . . . let's say you have your cousins around . . . then maybe they'll say, "OK, I'll just go, because so-and-so, who is the cousin to this person, used to come and help us." Only for that sake. Otherwise, if you have no one, just you and you're always away from other people, so, bad news for you.

A similar threat was, in fact, partially carried out in the case of one interviewee whose brothers had been living away from Hamburg for quite some time. Rather than not help at all with the grave-digging, the young men from the village arrived late to start the job. According to Nozibele, a family member must belong to one or two clubs—otherwise the

women won't come to help: "They'll just come when it's close to time of eating, or they will come and sit there and see how you are going to get on with your work." The worst punishment I saw was inflicted on one extremely poor family who received very little help with the preparations of the funeral for their young son. The absence of people at the ceremony was a source of great pain to the grieving mother:

Nothozamile: *Yoh*, my sister, I was so hurt. I was very hurt. I said to myself, even if I'm mature now, something like that never happened to me before. They were supposed to be here and to say to me I was wrong in this or right in that

Vanessa: Why do you think they didn't come?

Nothozamile: I really do not know, I won't tell you lies Even though there were no things, I expected to see people as I used to see people in other funerals, many people. At my son's funeral, there were only few people; they only filled the house. The funeral date was Wednesday—maybe people didn't know that. [Trans.]

As the above examples illustrate, the breaches in the *masincedisane* norm that merit varying degrees of punishment are a show of non-cooperation and commitment to the community (e.g., by being lazy or being away); being non-egalitarian (the family, in Mthunzi's example, that was "too expensive" for everyone else); and, in this last instance, being too marginalized to participate on equal terms with others. When I asked one interviewee why this family had been ostracized in this way, she was evasive. I presume it was partly because they were extremely poor (as Xola, who was barely making ends meet, remarked, "One thing I know—as long as you are coming from the poor people, you are not recognized"). The other reason was probably that both parents were known to have a drinking problem. The ostracism served as a clear message that, in the eyes of the community, they were failing to take themselves in hand and to build a respectable home.

Masincedisane and the place/space of women

During both the preparations for a funeral and, particularly, during the event itself, normative gender roles are adhered to—roles that assert the authority of men and prescribe a more submissive, silent role for women. The prayer meetings are led by a senior male relative; the master of ceremonies on the funeral day is always a man; the pastor who gives a sermon after the speakers is invariably a man; after the burial, food is served first to the immediate family and then to all senior men, followed by senior women and youth. That men should be in control was part of the natural order of things, according to Mthunzi:

Mthunzi: Men are there to control the arrangements and to calm down the family. They are the decision makers on the burial date. They give the report to the women of the family. They discuss this by the kraal. They control the expenditures of the funeral, arrange the money from the bank. There can be women, but there must be men to make sure the money has been drawn in the right way. The men are the ones who must check the body at the mortuary. The men are managing everything, the women are the men's witnesses.

Vanessa: Is it important that men and women always be separate?

Mthunzi: Yes, because there are some things that must be discussed secretly before it can go to the women.

Vanessa: Why?

Mthunzi: Because women are used to making demands without looking at the whole situation. They are used to lose control, they need to be controlled by men. The men must also observe the situation after the funeral: Will the family stay together? Are there any conflicts because of the expenditures that were made? They also discuss the money and balances.

These assertions contrast strikingly with women's actual contributions to funerals described thus far. On an emotional, organizational and financial level, women are in fact far more present than men for the most part (cf. Bank 2002:647). It is the older women who sit for hours inside with the grieving family to "preserve their dignity"; it is women who attend the prayer meetings in greater numbers, and whose voices lead the singing; it is the younger women who are continually working, cleaning and sprucing up the house,

preparing food, washing dishes; it is the women's buying clubs that offset a major part of the cost of drinks and groceries for the event; it is women's informal networks that make it possible for families to borrow the pots and dishes required to feed all the guests; it is women who are more active in the church and whose *manyanos* hold a special service on the Thursday before the funeral. It is clear that the actual roles and activities of women far exceed the public 'weight' they are given. As I interviewed women about their work groups, *manyanos* and grocery clubs—all areas in which the *masincedisane* norm is highly operative—a variety of critiques, what in Scott's (1990) terms, might be called "hidden transcripts," soon emerged. Consider, for instance, the following comment by 35-year-old Lungiswa:

Lungiswa: In most cases, in our culture, fathers don't give themselves time to think, they don't plan. We always bring the plan to them, and they approve.

Vanessa: Really?

Lungiswa: Yes! They never think, "What are we going to eat?" But we tell them, "We are going to eat this, or no, that's not good, because of this and this." They never plan; they approve your plan.

Vanessa: How do you feel about that?

Lungiswa: We are used to it! [laughs]

Vanessa: So what you're saying is women are the clever ones?

Lungiswa: Definitely. They will never go anywhere without our support! [laughs again]

Such critiques were all the more interesting, since the women actively involved in funerals were among the conformist members of the community, whose privileged position depended on maintaining at least the appearance of conservative gender norms. The neighbours and kin who came to work at the home of a bereaved family were generally younger married women (*makotis*)⁸⁷ and therefore already inducted into the

⁸⁷ Not all of the women who come to work are *makotis*, particularly since, as I discuss further on, more and more people in Hamburg are choosing not to get married. Young, unmarried women who are either neighbours or kin are expected to work and 'stand in' as *makotis*, as indicated by Nozibele (an unmarried woman): "Not all of the women who go to work are *makotis*, but the emphasis is on newly-weds or married

established order; the members of *manyanos* tended to be respectable (also usually married or widowed) women in their forties and older; and the members of the grocery clubs (often also members of *manyanos*) had to have at least some form of financial security in order to participate. As the Interviewee List in Appendix 6 shows, 14 out of the 18 women I interviewed were married, separated or widows and 13 were in their forties or older.

In a chapter titled “Gender and generational struggles for the homestead in Peddie District,” Ainslie (2005:217) describes gender relations and family life at the time of his fieldwork (2001) as “not imploding, but . . . very tense.” Structural factors contributing to this tension include the destabilizing and destructive effects of migrant labour on family life; the re-entrenchment of patriarchal norms during apartheid (Mager 1996, 1999); the erosion, particularly in the 1990s, of patriarchal authority vested in the man as breadwinner brought about by unemployment and casualization of labour; an inverse growth, during the same period, in the economic power of women (elderly women in particular) in the wake of the post-1994 social welfare program; and rural women’s growing awareness and active embracing of human rights and gender equality discourses, as enshrined in the country’s new constitution⁸⁸ (Ainslie 2005:197; Liebenberg, 1997).

As described in the previous chapter, funerals are one social domain in which normative gender roles are strictly adhered to—at least publicly. Yet, as the views of

women. For example, I can go work at a house if there is no *makoti* in my family and my mother is ill or old, even though I won’t be expected to do the same work as a *makoti*. Especially if they are a neighbour or I’m related, whether by clan name or by surname. But for a *makoti*, it’s a must to go and work at a place where there is a funeral.”

⁸⁸ South African women activists (urban- and rural-based) played a key role in the charged negotiations around the interim constitution. Their efforts to insert gender-specific demands into the post-apartheid state paid off: the 1996 Constitution, lauded as one of the most progressive in the world, includes specific protections on the basis of gender, and the formal participation of women in public life since 1994 constitutes a dramatic change in the history of South Africa (Andrews 2001; Kaganas and Murray 1994).

Lungiswa and Mthunzi cited above suggest, differently situated actors can have widely diverging commentaries on what is really going on, revealing some of the underlying tensions Ainslie (2005) is referring to. In the following pages, I explore what was happening in women's spaces in the context of funerals, with a view to getting a better idea of the nature and sources of tensions. I suggest that the women are often caught between upholding "legitimate" cultural scripts and, within the framework of *masincedisane*, creating spaces of power and resistance of their own. Since most of them were married or widowed, I start with brief look at marriage, past and present, in the Xhosa context.

Xhosa marriage: past and present

Wedding celebrations in Hamburg have become relatively rare, partly because, given current economic conditions, many men find it difficult to amass sufficient funds to pay *lobola* (bridewealth) and, particularly given the rise in mortality rates and funerals, families often cannot cover the considerable expenses involved in a full-scale wedding celebration. However, this change is quite recent. As indicated, most of the women in my interview sample were, or had been married. While, as Ainslie (2005:197, 216) observes, many younger women in Peddie District are choosing to remain single and women-headed households are on the rise, for others, marriage continues to be an attractive option, albeit on rather different terms than those experienced by previous generations of women.

According to Xhosa custom, on marriage, a woman would be incorporated into her husband's family. Married women's lives were governed by a variety of stages and

rules. A recently married wife (*makoti*) was required to wear a black shawl, a German-print skirt and apron⁸⁹, and a towel or cloth around her waist. She would cover her head with a *doek* (headscarf) lowered far over her eyes. She would have to adopt deferential behaviour towards her in-laws, was expected to work the hardest in the household (under the control of her mother-in-law), and had to use a language of respect and avoidance (*inthlonipo*)⁹⁰. As Nosebenzile described it to me:

When I came here, I had to wear those [German] print things—a skirt and apron—and the shawl and that black *doek*, down like this [demonstration], so when you bring tea to the family, you can't see where you're going! [laughs]. When I come from fetching water from the river, I can't come in front, I must go behind the houses. You can't go in this side, this side is for men. And you can't put cow dung on this side of the floor when you are new, because it is for the fathers of the house. Only the daughters of the home can put cow dung on that side. And when you are new, you must sit on this mat here [demonstrates, laughing].

Upon the birth of her first child, a *makoti* would rise in status, becoming an *umfazana* (young wife). She would be allowed to tie the shawl over her breasts, but would still be required to work for her mother-in-law. On the birth of her second child, she would graduate to *umfazi* (wife), where she would gain independence from her mother-in-law, and finally to *umfazi omkhulu* (senior wife) (Mager 1996; Wilson et al. 1952; Liebenberg 1997). Mager (1996:17) describes the “restraint inscribed in the practice of *inthlonipo* . . . as one means of developing female forbearance, necessary for a wife's subordination to her husband and mother-in-law. *Inthlonipo* was thus a means of regulating the interface between male domination and female subordination.”

⁸⁹ A distinctively patterned cloth dating back to the 19th century (see Figure 7).

⁹⁰ Described by Mager (1996:17) as “a system of language and behaviour avoidance forbidding a married woman from uttering certain syllables pertaining to her father-in-law's name and from entering designated spaces”

According to Nozibele, very few women marrying in Hamburg today practice *intlhonipo*, which she described as “one of the many rules pressed on women’s shoulders to make them inferior to men.” However, a *makoti* is still expected to obey the rules of married life, although these can be adapted to changing circumstances. If she is working in a city, for example, she will only be expected to work at her in-laws’ house and wear her *makoti* clothes during visits. The details of a young wife’s duties can nonetheless be the subject of intense negotiations among herself, her mother-in-law and her husband.

Women’s work groups

My first real exposure to the world of *makotis* in the context of funerals was when I inadvertently became one. During the preparations for Nothemba’s funeral, which the family had given me permission to videotape, I offered, in between filming, to lend a hand wherever needed. In no time, someone had brought out a German-print apron and I was handed a scrubbing brush and pail of whitewash tinted with green dye. As I began painting the wall, the other women giggled and teased me about being Liberty’s mother’s *molokazana* (daughter-in-law)⁹¹. In the days that followed, I got a good idea of just how much work is involved in funeral preparations—hours of peeling and chopping vegetables, making tea, overseeing the huge pots of meat and vegetables cooking on the outside fires, baking bread, serving food and washing dishes. On the Friday evening before the funeral, the women called in younger people to help peel bags upon bags of vegetables way into the night. Although the language barrier did not allow me to participate in these feminized spaces nearly as much as I would have liked, I did get a

⁹¹ I was eventually given a married woman’s name (Nozuko) which means “one who brings honour to the family.” After the funeral, several people took to greeting with my new name, with a big a chuckle each time.

strong sense of how, as Ainslie (2005:226) remarks, they are important “sites of sociality” for the women, affording valuable opportunities to “exchange information, to discuss local problems and to mull over the stories and scandals that had come to light in other villages or in ‘town’.” Thandiswa gives a delightful sense of the flavour of these conversations:

Vanessa: What do the women chat about all the time that they’re cooking and so on?

Thandiswa: Ooooh, everything! All the gossips . . . Ooohh! Don’t ask me – Everything. They even get curious of the family matters . . . [puts on a high-pitched voice]: “*Mmm, the daughter, ay you’re back. Where have you been? Hmmm—are you working? We’ve seen so-and-so’s arrived . . .*” That’s the report you’re getting now from them. “*Yoh, ay shame, their daughter has come, she’s just arrived. So-and-so’s come—she didn’t even come to greet us!*” [bursts out laughing]. Oh my goodness, so they talk a lot, totally different from what they’ve come for!

According to Ainslie (2005:226), the organization of women’s work for ritual events in Hamburg involves a degree of coercion that ultimately serves to both underline and erase class differences:

The frequent *roping in* [emphasis added] of local kinswomen and neighbours from poorer households to help with the preparations for a ritual, played an important role in both recognizing and subverting economic (and class) distinctions between individuals and households. By enlisting the unpaid help of neighbours, it could be said that wealthier host *imizi* [homesteads] were exploiting their labour in pursuit of conspicuous consumption at the benefit of the host *umzi*.

I am not convinced, however, that in the context of rituals governed by the *masincedisane* norm, a full understanding can be achieved by assigning a monetary value to what is clearly a relationship of exchange based on social capital. The neighbours and kinswomen I spoke to about their work made it abundantly clear that (in accordance with *masincedisane*) they were free to decide whether or not they wanted to go and work at a

particular house. Melody, for example, described how the *makotis* meet at one person's house to discuss the event at hand:

If they [the host family] are not attending other funerals, we take the decision that we are not going. Let them do their job. Let them stand up; we want them to wake up. We are punishing them so they will take part next time. [Trans.]

This is the case even when the host family is of higher economic standing. Furthermore, when the women decide to work at a home, they expect to be able to work as they see fit. If the host family is too demanding or interfering, the women might be less cooperative. Since their work is crucial to the success of the event, they have a considerable amount of leverage—despite their ‘subordinate’ status and the menial nature of their tasks.

Women's buying/credit clubs

As described in this and the previous chapter, the many buying clubs used for funerals (and other occasions)⁹² are practically the exclusive preserve of women. While there are no specific prerequisites for joining these clubs (other than financial reliability), members tend to be respectable, married or widowed, church-going women in their forties and older. Since membership is often capped at 20, belonging to the clubs is a privilege, and a prospective member has to wait until an existing member tells her a space has opened up for her to join. Like the Ocean Burial Society, the buying clubs generally have a constitution, a chairwoman and secretary, but not a treasurer, since funds and goods are collected and distributed immediately on an as-needed basis. Monthly meetings are held to check on defaulters, and discuss new business (for instance, changes in contributions and fundraising projects). As the Interviewee List in Appendix 6 shows,

⁹² One interviewee estimated there to be at least 20 such clubs in Hamburg.

women belonging to one club tend to be members of at least one other, which can sometimes put them in a tight spot if claims come due at the same time:

Nowethu: But at times you find that—yoh!—you are in four clubs [laughs]. And that one whose family member is going to be buried is also in the four clubs, so you end up paying close to R300 for that week! . . . That's why, as I have said, very seldom, with us, does the person die this week and we bury this week, because we open up the gap for these things. And maybe if I haven't got the money, and you know that, "Eh! When is the end of the month—only on the 31st, and this person is going to be buried on the 16th," then I can come to you, and I can go to that one and ask, "Lend me R100 so long so that I can go and pay there. I'll see you at the end of the month." They do open up the gap for that thing, also.

Mechanisms affording flexibility (prolonging the period before the funeral day; borrowing from others) are crucial to the successful operation of the clubs. It is also clear that, in an environment where very few people have regular monthly incomes, government social welfare grants (particularly old age pensions) are an important asset against which to borrow funds.

The clubs, as mentioned, offset a significant portion of the costs and labour involved in preparing for the funeral. Just as important as their financial role, however, is their social role for women in the community:

Nowethu: So it is very good, inasmuch as if you are a woman around here, whether you're an elderly woman or a younger *makoti*. If you're not in the clubs, people are wondering, "Why aren't you in a club? What is going to help you one day? Who is going to sort of take this weight off your shoulders if you are not with people, if you are not building with people?" You know, so for us, it's something very funny when you are not in these things.

In many ways, the social role outweighs the financial role. Mr. Mkani, who was a very successful businessman, explained how his wife belonged to a club nonetheless:

My wife is a member of one, because we want to be part and parcel of the community. It's not that we cannot bury our children by ourselves, but we like to be part of the community. So you must do this to be an active member of the community, otherwise they will sideline you when you've got a problem . . .

You don't want to be isolated or boycotted, but to be part and parcel of the community.

This case bears interesting comparison with Piot's (1999) exploration of hierarchies of value in Kabre relations of exchange in northern Togo. Piot notes that the borrowing and lending of animals and land among Kabre is ubiquitous. While he at first assumed the practice was entirely driven by needs, he gradually learned that there was a lot more at play:

[T]here were several interesting cases that led me to realize that there was more than just the exchange of utilities going on here. A particularly striking example involved a land-rich man in the community who owned twenty fields. Of these, he cultivated six for himself, loaned out four to friends, and left the other two to lie fallow. However, he also cultivated two additional borrowed fields. When I discovered this, I assumed there must be a utilitarian explanation for these borrowings—that the land was more fertile than that in his fallow fields, or that it was closer to his house. However, neither of these was the case. In fact, some of his fallow land was better land closer to his house than the land he had borrowed. Rather, he borrowed, he claimed, because “it is not good to die without having eaten off someone else's plate.” The metaphor here expressed a desire to establish social relations that lies behind much Kabre exchange Indeed, I would say that all of the exchanges . . . have as much to do with relationships as with utilities. (p. 56)⁹³

I would suggest that much the same sort of social/economic exchange is happening in the funeral buying clubs I have described. What is interesting as well is that this particular pattern of exchange, situated within the wider *masincedisane* norm, is very clearly gendered, and can thus reveal important aspects of tensions and changes in gender roles

⁹³ Compare, also to Ndione's (1994) study of the economic logic applied by women fish-sellers in Dakar, who would rather invest in one another than a bank: “« Notre banque, c'est nos relations », rappellent-elles souvent. Elles peuvent faire de dépôts, effectuer des retraits, emprunter et rembourser sans grande difficulté . . . chaque jour, « nous enterrons une hyène en en déterrante une autre » ou, en d'autres termes, pour faire face à nos obligations, nous prenons de nouveaux engagements” (p. 16). (“Our bank is our relationships,” they often reminded us. They can make deposits and withdrawals, borrow and reimburse, with relative ease “Every day, we bury a hyena and dig up another”—in other words, to meet our obligations, we simply engage in new ones.) [My translation]

and relationships in rural villages like Hamburg. When I asked Nowethu why they didn't want to admit men to their group, she replied:

Men feel that "Ooh, things with women . . . they talk too much" and whatnot and whatnot. You know how are men? They always take us to be those . . . I can't even describe it. Men always think that they are the only people who are clever, who can think and whatnot, but we work more than they do actually.

Thandiswa echoed the sentiments that, 'official' appearances to the contrary, women were the ones forming the social and economic fibre of the community, while men she described as generally selfish, irresponsible and incompetent:

Women have a lot of initiative. They start and do things . . . and it helps. Most of the things women do, they always stand to have something. Unlike men, you know men just think of meeting at the shebeens and that is the end of it. And spending the whole night or evening away from their families, away from their wives. But with the women, really they've got plans of trying to have something that will keep them closer. I've never seen anything organized by men. They only have one plan . . . every 25th of December, every man in Hamburg knows that he must get a bottle of brandy. They will be gathered there in so-and-so's house and they will drink until the 26th. So, what do they get from that? Nothing. But women are . . . *eish*, it's bad news with men, really. They are not progressive . . . At the end of the day, they can't go anywhere without women.

Thandiswa's critique of men as failing in their social and economic duties as husbands speaks in part to a crisis of masculinity, as a growing number of men, caught up in a cycle of unemployment and casual labour, fail to live up to what Ainslie (2005:187) describes as "the Xhosa ideal of the man's role, as husband and father, being that of *intsika yekhaya* [the pillar of the home] . . . the dominant, patriarchal order in rural villages across Peddie District, which rested on constructions of men as breadwinners and providers in their households and as the arbiters of moral authority in the home and community" (compare to Mthunzi's description of a man's role in his *umzi*, cited at the beginning of this chapter). Ainslie (p. 187) describes how marginalized, poverty-stricken men in Hamburg were frequently alcoholic and generally referred to as "useless" by

women who sought to limit their social interaction with them. However, Thandiswa's comments refer as well to husbands who are not necessarily struggling financially, but are nonetheless failing to fulfil their responsibilities, no doubt causing considerable strain in household relations. Women, in contrast, are affirmed to be capable community-builders, in line with government discourses of progress and development. As Nowethu's comments suggest, they are the ones who are truly clever, who really hold the strings of power. Material power and normative gender roles are a strong point of tension in Hamburg. As I shall explore further in the following chapter, the women's buying clubs appear to provide an outlet for these tensions and frustrations, a way for women to exercise power both within and outside normative roles and expectations.

Women's *manyano* groups

In talking about their clubs, not only did women underline the ways in which they compare favourably with men in terms of progress; they also described the emotional support and solidarity they derived:

Nowethu: You know, Nessa, the clubs have made us to be more . . . how can I say? It has bonded us a lot. We pray together, it makes a very strong bond, that thing. You know one another's problems, we share one another's problems. We cry together, we laugh together when there's joy, and then it's nice to see those 20 women, especially in the funeral . . . You feel that these are my sisters, you know. And at times, you feel that they are even more than your actual sisters.

This solidarity came through very strongly in the women's *manyano* meetings I attended and discussed with interviewees. Haddad (2004:8) describes the *manyano* prayer groups in South Africa as "a place where women gather together, without men present, and prescribe their own agenda of faith and practical daily living. They have consistently fought for this space and ensured that the control of the meetings lies in their own

leadership.” The respective church uniforms of each *manyano*, argues Haddad, are charged with meaning and power:

The uniform is not only a symbol, but has a substantial quality, inherent in itself, which is conferred on the wearer. In this sense, the uniform embodies supernatural powers that infuse the material world and become a resource for dealing with [the material reality of survival] (p. 9).

A Methodist woman described her *manyano* to me as the “red army,” and the ceremony to hang the uniform of a deceased member as bidding farewell to a fallen soldier (see Figure 9). Like the prayer meetings described in the previous chapter, the *manyano* meetings follow a format of extempore prayer and preaching, alternated with hymn singing. What distinguishes them from the prayer meetings is the continual relating of

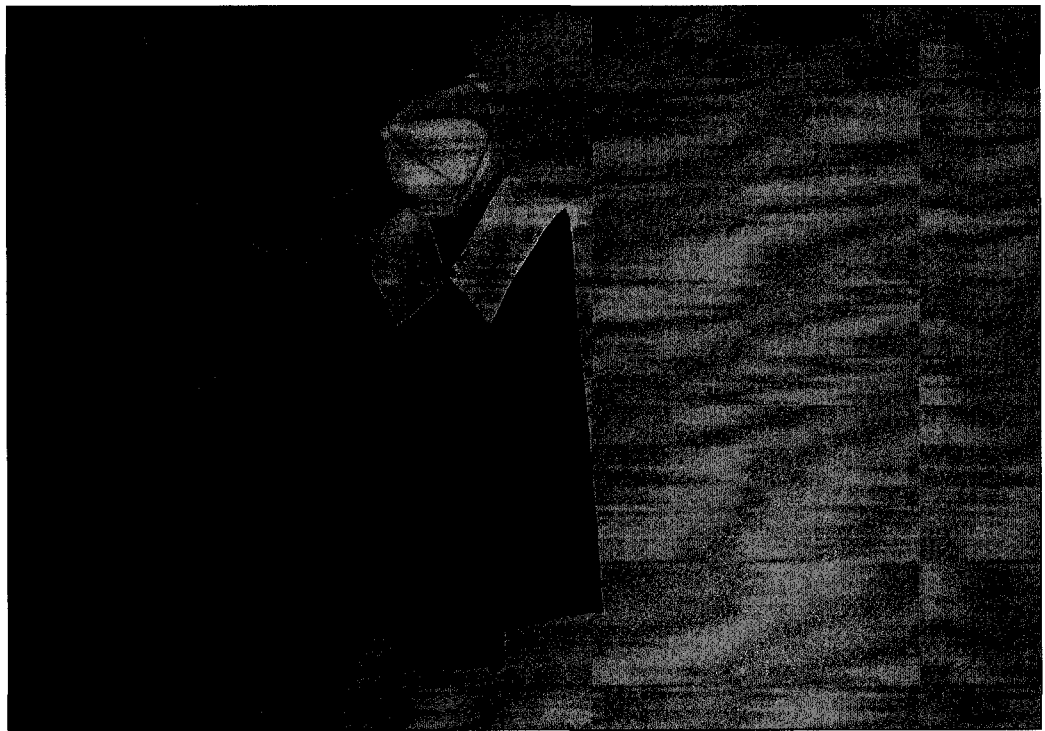


Figure 9 – Hanging of the church uniform

Biblical passages to personal experience. It was through these personal accounts in the meetings I attended that I began to understand other, hidden sides to many women's lives in Hamburg.

A common theme was how the women's departed sister had finally escaped the trials and tribulations of this world with forbearance and dignity. The church leader at one of the meetings introduced this theme by citing a passage from Revelations 3:10-12:

Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God.

Expounding on this passage, one speaker likened life to a marathon race, which the deceased had finished with flying colours:

We have not finished the race, beautiful mothers. This lady has won the race. She was in a marathon and she reached the finishing point. So we say, "Goodbye! Go well!" [Trans.]

Other speakers cited the difficulties of her race—illness, crushing poverty and the challenges of married life. At the end, all congratulated their sister on her finishing her race with dignity, without succumbing to the temptations of alcohol, without leaving her marital home. At another prayer meeting, a speaker likened life to a treacherous road:

Here, on this way, it is essential that we tread on thorns. On this path, we are bound to fall down, even slip and roll down flat on our stomachs. Here, on this path, we are about to be hit back and front, until at some point you doubt and ask, "Where is this God if He really exists?" [Trans.]

Again, married life was counted among life's principal difficulties:

Marriage was never like jam . . . I never enjoyed it. But God is moulding us. He is moulding us so that we can be calabashes to carry the good news, because if we enjoyed butter, we wouldn't be like this. We would be far away from God's appointments, because we would be relaxing. In my married life, I was stubborn, wearing a pair of trousers. I had hard times in marriage, but because God's love is great, He looks after the people He is going to use; He moulds them. And because

I am loyal to the parents, I took off the trousers and went back to my marriage.
[Trans.]

Another speaker, referring to the life of the deceased, was much more explicit about the nature of the difficulties she encountered in her married life:

We are not going to reveal all those bad things—every married woman knows about those strong winds, those strong winds. She was beaten by those strong winds, staying with us, with these mothers. And when it was difficult, we'd go to the bedroom. There is this day when she could not get up. I told her to sit down on the chair and rest. We did what we had to do. Then in three weeks' time, she was up again, my mothers. [Trans.]

In light of the above, the comfort and strength offered by the women's *manyano*, as described in the following description of a spiritual 'calling,' takes on a much more poignant meaning:

The time will come when these mothers will dress your wounds. You will feel a very cold pain behind the ear that will make you—even if you're washing the dishes—just stand still. Then you will hear the wounded Christ say to you, "Hold my hand and walk with me." [Trans.]

Domestic violence is a surprisingly normalized yet, at the same time, silenced reality in Hamburg. Since it was not the focus of my research and I did not suspect how widespread it was, I did not initially ask about it during interviews and none of my interviewees brought it up in the course of conversations about married life. When I did raise the issue with certain women later on, what I was told—and the seething but well-disguised anger that lay so close to the surface—took me by surprise. Consider the following views of Lungiswa, an unmarried woman in her forties:

Lungiswa: Domestic violence is the order of the day in Hamburg. Women have accepted it as the norm in society. A woman is meant to suffer in marriage, and that simply means she has to bear the beatings, the lies of the husband, the adultery, the vulgar language used by men when drunk, I mean every disgusting thing you can think of. Men know that women depend on them; if you leave your man who is going to have you? If you live for years without a man, people will

start whispering behind your back, saying that you might be a witch or you have a snake that can change to be a man at night. So women stick to their men like glue, hoping that as time goes by, they might miraculously change for the better, which is always not true. Men do as they please and this is the reason why married women are the targets of HIV because they sit at home and wait for their men who are sleeping around with girls and other drunken women in the shebeens.

Ainslie (2005:194) observes that, during the 1990s, regional media reported a growing number of cases of serious domestic violence, rape and murder against women and girls. While the violence might have escalated to new levels in the past decade or so, the patterns are not new. As Anne Mager (1996, 1999) has demonstrated, reports on increased cases of violence against women appeared in Eastern Cape courts and media from the late 1940s. The reasons for this trend are varied and complex⁹⁴, but one of its net results was a “hardening” of masculinity centred on an assertion of power over women and often expressed through acts of physical and sexual violence (Mager 1996:15, 1998). The recent economic empowerment of older women (through old age pensions) and relative disempowerment of men (through structural unemployment) is doubtless an exacerbating factor as well⁹⁵. Shortly before I left Hamburg, I witnessed the tragedy of such violence. Pumza Gusha, the sister of my friend Vuvu, was stabbed to death in front of her two young daughters by a man she knew—apparently because she had decided to call off her recent relationship with him. She was 31 years old.

⁹⁴ Mager (1996:16) describes, for instance, how migrant labour patterns fostered by the apartheid regime upset customary modes of socializing young men and women into their respective gendered identities, partly by lessening parental control over the process. Migrant labour also caused tensions in marital relations, since men were absent from their homes for long periods. Furthermore, customary or ‘native’ law, codified by white officials and recognized by the 1927 Administration Act, had the effect of shoring up patriarchal power and enforcing ‘traditional’ norms that were not in sync with lived realities.

⁹⁵ As Andrews (2001) and others have indicated, a major structural obstacle to ensuring that the formal rights for women enshrined in the 1996 Constitution become substantive rights, is the extremely high level of violence committed against women.

Many violent crimes against women go unreported or unsolved, and, when they are arrested, the criminals often do very little time. Women are reluctant to speak out for fear of actions of revenge (assault, vandalism, even murder). The police, I was often told, do not take rape cases very seriously. The burden of proof is on the victim, and the police officer might be related to the rapist or have some kind of connection with his family, so most cases end up being dropped. Domestic violence, as Lungiswa indicated, is reported even less frequently, since it is seen as normal. It is also a source of shame to the abused woman, who is likely only to confide in her close friends.

As noted, violence against women has a long-standing history in the region and is part of a much more deeply-rooted set of factors than present circumstances alone. Gender relations and gendered violence are important, complex topics that deserve a far more sustained and thorough treatment than I am able to give them in the scope of this thesis. My goal, as stated at the outset of this chapter, has been to explore one of the points of tension that emerged in the practices and commentary of women in relation to funerals. I have argued that, using the *masincedisane* norm, these women have created for themselves spaces of empowerment under the mask of conformity⁹⁶. The neighbours and kinswomen who come to work at the house don their German-print aprons and assume the role of dutiful, hard-working *makotis* while keeping tabs on what is going on in the community and ensuring that the value of their physical labour, in this context at least, is

⁹⁶ Compare to the following observation made by Ainslie (2005:197–8): “Spurred on by the post-1994 government-endorsed emphasis on greater ‘gender equity’ . . . rural women were asserting themselves economically and socially with considerable vigour . . . In increasing numbers, women in Peddie District were prepared to ‘go it alone’ without men, either by shunning marriage altogether or through divorce or estrangement . . . They socialized mainly with other women in church groups, transacted with each other in rotating credit associations or burial societies and generally ‘built the homestead’ in broad adherence with Xhosa cultural norms, but without the social stigma that in earlier decades came with the status of being *amakazana* [unmarried mothers]” Interestingly, as already noted, the younger and older women I interviewed, who were pursuing their ambitions in exactly these ways, were still very much invested in (although sometimes critical of) the institution of marriage and the respectability attached to it.

fully recognized and appreciated. The club members explore and enjoy the ‘modern,’ progressive fruits of their business and organizational skills in a manner that is endorsed by the community, since it is tied to the ‘traditional’ project of building the homestead. Like the *makotis*, they ensure that their role in the organization and financing of funerals is crucial. The *manyano* sisterhood, a powerful force in women’s lives and a powerful presence throughout the funeral proceedings, preaches forbearance—a hybrid blend of Christianity with *inthlonipo*—in the face of domestic violence. Resistance is couched in practices and attitudes that might too easily be dismissed as a lack of agency. However, in environments where social and economic factors afford people little room to manoeuvre, resistance must become more tactical. In her study of Malay women employed in Japanese factories, for example, Aihwa Ong (1997) describes cases of spirit possession as simultaneous resistance to the onerous demands of plant managers *and* accommodation to their culturally ascribed status as women (i.e., subordinate to men and given to emotional instability). In the women’s accounts, Ong sees “the unconscious beginnings of an idiom of protest against labor discipline and male control in the modern industrial situation” (p. 364). At the same time, she recognizes that, for the time being, the women’s tactics “speak not of class revolt but only of the local situation” (p. 369) (cf. Abu-Lughod 1990).

In this chapter, I have shown how the organization and performance of funerals reveal tensions tied to normative gender roles and changes. I have also shown how these tensions are contained by subtle adaptations of the cultural norms of *masincedisane* and *ukwakh’umzi*. In the following chapter, I explore another set of (material and

generational) tensions that emerge in funerals, and how these intersect with the HIV/AIDS epidemic that is bringing about so much death.

CHAPTER 7

FUNERALS, MONEY AND THE QUESTION OF RESPECT

A train tsotsi⁹⁷ in Johannesburg died when he tried to jump from one car to another. His leg got caught and he was pulled under the train. At his funeral, his first friend came forward and put R200 on the coffin. He said, "Yo, ma laait⁹⁸, this is for when you get hungry on your way to heaven. Maybe you can stop at a take-away—you can't arrive with an empty stomach!" His second friend came forward with a brand-new panga⁹⁹. "Hey, ma bra¹⁰⁰, this is to keep you safe on your way in case some tsotsis decide to attack you." The third one came forward with a bottle of Klipdrift¹⁰¹. "Ma chommie¹⁰², remember how we used to jol¹⁰³ together? This is for you to have some fun on the way." When somebody asked the three men what made them so sure their tsotsi friend was going to heaven and not to hell, one of them said, "Of course he's going to heaven! God will reward him for his services!" "What services?" asked the person. "Helping passengers get rid of their heavy change!"

This story, recounted by Mthunzi, with his usual dramatic flair, to a group of us late one afternoon, was received with much chuckling and shaking of heads¹⁰⁴. He and another woman had been talking about how funerals were changing in Hamburg, particularly how people were not as respectful as in the past. Prior to telling his tsotsi story, Mthunzi had treated us to an imitation of a drunken man arriving from the Jukebox¹⁰⁵ to a prayer meeting to pay his last respects, staggering up to give an impassioned speech of condolence, only to lose his train of thought and stumble—finger still raised to make the forgotten point—into an unsuspecting fellow sympathizer. The

⁹⁷ Soweto slang for "gangster."

⁹⁸ From the Afrikaans word "laaitie," meaning a younger person, especially a younger male (brother or son).

⁹⁹ Machete

¹⁰⁰ Male friend (from English "brother" and Afrikaans "broer")

¹⁰¹ A popular brand of brandy

¹⁰² Friend, buddy (from the English "chum")

¹⁰³ To have fun, party

¹⁰⁴ This is my best attempt to reconstruct the story from memory; it does not quite do justice to the verve of the original.

¹⁰⁵ Hamburg's most popular shebeen (drinking house)

lack of dignity and respect at today's funerals looms large in the national and regional press. Commentators point to signs of moral decay such as the relatively new "after-tears" party where "all sorts of drinks flow and mourners drink themselves into a stupor and dance the night away"¹⁰⁶. Other symptoms include a culture of status-seeking, whereby mourners try to outdo one another by wearing elegant, expensive and sometimes inappropriate clothing, and the bereaved family goes heavily into debt to purchase the most expensive coffin possible, along with costly extras in the form of wreaths, rental of a fancy hearse, music, video-recordings, elaborate tombstones, and a lavish meal for the many guests¹⁰⁷. Particularly deplored is the seeming indifference, on the part of mourners, towards the grieving family and the sombreness of the occasion. In contrast to the awe and reverence with which death was treated in times past, mourners today "talk about . . . the kind of food they had and the type of coffin the deceased was buried in"¹⁰⁸. Indeed, according to many commentators, the clothing styles, accoutrements and attitudes make the entire event seem more like a wedding than a mortuary ritual¹⁰⁹.

Although these articles are focused on funerals in urban environments, many of the criticisms resonated with the observations of people I interviewed in Hamburg. While the "after-tears" phenomenon appears not yet to have caught on (only one interviewee had held such a party, and most considered them a "disgrace"), the status-seeking, showy

¹⁰⁶ "Partying's the thing at today's funerals" (Mthethwa 2001).

¹⁰⁷ In an article titled "Rotten to the core", Vusi Shongwe (2002) cites the kwaito song "Seniyadelela, buyephi uBuntu?" ("Now you are being naughty, where has *ubuntu* gone?") by Mawillies, which describes women wearing mini-skirts at funerals and the practice of spinning cars in the graveyard, as if it were a racing event.

¹⁰⁸ "Funerals 'have lost their dignity'" (Khumalo 2002).

¹⁰⁹ Phumelele Ntombela-Nzimande (2000:8), in an article titled "Lavish funerals eat up resources," says, "Just what made us turn funerals into weddings, I do not know. Who started it and why the rest of us followed, I cannot tell. Those are academic questions now."

dress and indifferent and/or demanding attitude of visitors were frequently commented on:

Thandiswa: You know, going to a funeral is a big thing. Some people . . . I don't know whether they enjoy it, because, as I said to you, they check their attire, they take their best outfits . . . Yoh, people! You know, people these days are not shy, and they are not respecting these days. They lose their control. They would just say, "Wooh, what is this? *Wasilambisa apha!* ["We are starving here"] [she laughs]. Just like somebody told me that people rejected the plates in one family. They were given plastic plates, they turned them back, because they needed the stoneware, they needed the quality plates. They can't just take those plastic, take-away plates.

Comparisons between contemporary funerals and weddings or parties were often drawn. For instance, Mr. Mkani, talking about a funeral we had both attended over the weekend, remarked,

If there hadn't been a coffin there, you could have thought it was a party. I don't know what is happening to our people—things are changing. Perhaps it's because there are so many funerals now, people don't care anymore.

I had certainly noticed styles and attitudes that struck me as inappropriate for the event. At one burial, for instance, I was intrigued by a woman sporting large, red-rimmed sunglasses with chunky gold earrings, a low-cut, close-fitting white top, flowery skirt and high-heeled platform sandals, cheerfully chewing gum and swaying her hips to the singing. During another funeral, I was surprised to see a group of men gathered in one of the cars, chatting and taking swigs from a bottle while the service was in full force. Towards the end, people were talking and laughing while the preacher (as per rapidly scribbled translations by Liberty) was exhorting them to repent and prepare for their turn. I also heard my full share of comments about the food after the burial, which didn't seem to show much commiseration with the hosting family ("Why is it taking so long?"; "Why

are they serving them first?"; "I hope there's some chicken left!"; "This meat is too tough!").

When I asked people why such changes might be occurring, some mentioned the younger generation who bring back fashions and influences from the cities where they are working. On the subject of after-tears parties, for example, Nowethu remarked:

No – *yoh!* We don't do that! No, no, no, no. But, you know, let me not say 100 per cent, because things are changing. The younger ones are modern, you know. They copy these things. They're coming from Cape Town, East London, P.E. – they copy these things and they want to practice it here. So I wouldn't say, "No, never," because they are copy-cats, the children nowadays. And they're under the peer pressure also, so if you've got a funeral, "*Aybo*, can't you at least . . . even if it's one bottle, you know?" And then it ends up now being something like it's a must, and yet it's not a must.

It soon became clear that funerals in Hamburg are fraught with tensions brought about by a variety of contradictory forces: 'tradition' and custom are pitted against innovation and 'modernity'; urban lifestyles are seen as distinct from, yet are deeply enmeshed in rural practices, giving rise to a profound ambivalence as to what exactly is appropriate—aptly captured in Nowethu's description of the bottle of brandy being "a must . . . yet it's not a must." Mthunzi's story of the train tsotsi's funeral speaks to many of these issues. The long-lost tradition, described in Chapter Five, of burying the corpse of a household head with personal belongings for his protection, future food supply and pleasure in the afterlife (Soga 1932:320; Zide 1984:54) is revived and reconfigured to fit the tsotsi's precarious life in an urban environment—a panga replacing the assegai, money the bag of seeds, and a bottle of brandy the tobacco and pipe. Although the crime-driven world of a tsotsi in Johannesburg seems far-removed from 'bucolic' Hamburg where cows and goats wander wherever they please, and people cheerfully shout greetings to each other as they go about their daily business, uglier realities in the form of drugs, rape, assault and

murder are no strangers to the place. And, like all rural communities in South Africa, Hamburg has a history of labour migration to the cities. While labour migration patterns in Peddie District have tended to be more regional than long-distance since the mid-twentieth century, rural households have remained largely dependent on urban incomes for their livelihoods, resulting in consistently high levels of rural-urban mobility (Ainslie 2005:28)¹¹⁰. A combination of resources, ideas and practices are continually circulated across these urban-rural links. A recent factor further strengthening these ties is television. Hamburg was fully electrified in 1996; according to our HHEH Survey 2005 data, 111 out of 310 homes (36%) had a television. The impact of television in shaping local perceptions and aspirations should not be underestimated. In a newspaper article titled “A funeral to really die for!” reporter Zakhele Shiba (2001) describes how current lavish trends have been fuelled by high-profile funerals watched by millions of TV viewers.¹¹¹

From the above, it is clear that to refer to current practices and values in Hamburg as ‘traditional’ (versus ‘modern’) or even ‘rural’ requires much qualification (cf. Barber 1997; Comaroff and Comaroff 1993; Piot 1999). However, these are the terms people use as they grapple with their deep-seated ambivalence about changes occurring in their community, many of which are reflected in funerals (cf. Kratz 1993; Sanders 2003). At stake are core moral values—particularly respect and dignity. In Mthunzi’s story, the tsotsi’s friend blithely reframes the deceased’s criminal actions to preserve his good name

¹¹⁰ Ainslie (2005:99) argues that the dependency of rural households on the urban economy is such that one can only speak of ‘rural’ livelihoods in a very broad sense as “any livelihoods that contribute to the well-being of rurally-based homesteads and their members.”

¹¹¹ For instance, the funeral of assassinated SA Communist Party secretary-general Chris Hani in 1993, attended by close to 100,000 mourners, or those of prominent businessmen who are flown to the cemetery in a helicopter and buried in top-of-the-line imported caskets.

and the respectability of the occasion. The humour of the story lies in the sheer audacity of the move. It also strikes a chord, no doubt, because in real life (and death), ways of showing and earning respect can be fraught with tension, particularly when the disease that is claiming so many lives is highly stigmatized. Returning to the cultural norms of *masincedisane* (“let us help each other”) and, particularly, *ukwakh’umzi* (“building the homestead”), my aim in this chapter is to further explore the tensions around respect and respectability at funerals in the terms that local actors describe them. I will cite further commentary from newspaper articles to show the degree to which these tensions are both localized and part of nationwide trends and debates.

***Umkwakh’umzi* and respect**

As described in the previous chapter, the material, social and spiritual/religious aspects of ‘building’ the homestead are inextricably connected. Having material assets allows a homestead to enter into satisfactory relationships of exchange with other homesteads and ensures the satisfaction of the ancestors, who, through their blessings, secure social and material prosperity for their living kin (McAllister 2001:178). In my interviews, I found that people’s belief in filial obligation toward the ancestors and the subsequent rewards or punishments continued to be very strong. Consider Nowethu’s description of the *ukukhapa* and *ukubuyisa* mortuary rituals that she “owed” to her husband:

Nowethu: I’ve buried, *ndakhapa* [I’ve done *ukukhapa*] I’m going to *buyisa*, and, God willing, I’m going to make a tombstone. Then I know that I’ve completed him—I owe nothing. In fact, with the tombstone, it’s something out of you. But with us, with the family, and with the culture, you must *khapa* and you must *buyisa*. That is very important.

Vanessa: It's like a debt that you have to the community and to the family, in a way?

Nowethu: Yes, yes. If you haven't done those things, you've done nothing. So although your funeral was glamorous, if you haven't *khapa'd* and you haven't *buyisa'd*, you haven't done anything. You still owe, you know, you still owe towards your ancestors as well. If you don't do it, it's like your ancestors won't . . . his ancestors won't look after you.

The threat of incurring the wrath or disapproval of one's agnatic or affinal ancestors appeared to be just as real as that of being disciplined by the community for failure to do one's part as a community member¹¹². Behind the strong sense of obligation is what Hammond-Tooke (1974:360) describes as "the most fundamental moral prescription" in Xhosa culture: "the need to show respect (Xhosa: *intlonipho*) to lineage seniors and, indeed, to all members of the senior generation." This respect or deference is symbolized in the killings for various life-cycle rituals: "Every time a killing is made for the ancestors the officiant is stating in symbolic action this basic principle of filial piety and respect for seniors" (Hammond-Tooke 1974:360).

A successful ritual is measured by the degree to which the homestead is able to command respect (in the sense of approval) by performing its necessary duties (showing the necessary deference) with the appropriate means. In material terms, approval can be earned in a variety of ways. Cows are the traditional currency of choice and continue to have a lot of cultural and economic weight (Ainslie 2005; Ferguson 1992). As Nowethu remarked,

You know you are being graded by what you possess—especially in the kraal. You can have cars and you can have this and that, but . . . at general meetings, if you stand up and you're somebody that hasn't got cows, it's like . . . it's hard. If you don't have a kraal, you can't even talk in a meeting.

¹¹² Recall Norget's (2006:115) observation that, in Oaxaca, "the dead are social beings every bit as much as the living."

The position of cattle as a cultural signifier in relation to funerals is interesting. As noted in Chapter Five, until relatively recently, it was not customary for people in Hamburg to slaughter a cow or ox for the funeral proper and many interviewees remarked on how they initially found eating meat after the burial to be morally wrong and physically repugnant. Although it is now *de rigueur* for families that can afford it to slaughter a cow or ox for a funeral, it is still not considered a ritual killing. The animal is killed outside the kraal with little ceremony, and it is not crucial that it bellow to attract the ancestors' attention. However, having the means to slaughter a cow is important, along with other signs of wealth. Consider the following explanation by Nolumanyano of why she and her sisters decided to spend as much as they could on their mother's funeral:

Nolumanyano: When we had that funeral [for my mother], we had the feeling, "Let us do a nice thing, a big thing," because we thought it was a thanksgiving to her, because she did a lot for us, she brought us up. So we were happy to have her. We miss her, so let us do something special for her. It doesn't matter if she doesn't see it, let us do it. And the money which we used is . . . to make my mother . . . because we hope that . . . yes she's dead, but she can see us. Just as a kind of spirit. Although she's dead, she can talk to us, she can come and visit to us. We don't know where she is, but she's standing there, looking at us. She can say, "Oh, look at my children, what they did for me." You see.

Vanessa: So that was a very strong thought in your mind—what your mother would think of the kind of funeral you gave her?

Nolumanyano: Yes, because, as Christians, as you look at the Bible, and on the Ten Commandments, which Moses wrote on the hill, told by God to write . . . one of those Ten Commandments said you must respect your parents, so that you are going to be fulfilled, you are going to be . . . you have the joy, you have a long time of living, because you respect your parents, you respect your elders. You just keep respect wherever you are staying or going, you must give respect. So much that we spent a lot, because we want everything to be successful. We were very proud of that.

The respect due to lineage seniors, as described by Hammond-Tooke (1974), is translated into a Christian framework, but the basic principle remains the same: by performing their filial duties in the appropriate manner, Nolumanyano and her sisters can hope to enjoy

long and prosperous lives. It is appropriate for a funeral ceremony not only to slaughter a beast but also to spend on a variety of items in order to “do a nice thing, a big thing.” Nolumanyano was proud to describe in detail how the family pooled their resources and the extras they were able to afford (for instance, upgrading the coffin to a casket, having a videorecording, purchasing a tombstone, buying new clothes and shoes). As far as she was concerned, they had made a wise decision, because since her mother’s death, the family was doing well: one sister had received a government grant to start a small piggery business; another had bought a new car; Nolumanyano’s youngest daughter had passed her matric exam

As mentioned, many of the consumer items that help build the prestige of contemporary funerals in Hamburg are associated with youth and urban influences:

MaDlamini: Some people go to check what the others are wearing—especially the young ones. They even go to the extent to buy new clothes to show off. Funerals before, it was a tradition that you put black clothes. Now we put all sorts of colours, some compete . . .

Mr. Mkani: They want to impress with their brand new cars, cell phones, dresses, all those wonderful things—this generation.

MaDlamini: Especially if it’s the funeral of a known person, popular, famous or whatever.

Some interviewees explicitly described such trends as ‘modern’ (recall Nowethu’s observation, cited earlier, that “the younger ones are modern”); others simply stressed the desire to follow the latest styles:

Thandiswa: If it’s not taking us back, people can follow whatever you do. You know people, they copy, they want to have that standard. So if you can do something different, but very current in these days of ours, it will be more influential, people would like to copy that.

Vanessa: So there are real trends, real fashions when it comes to funerals?

Thandiswa: Yes, my dear. And people really, they just follow, because they want it to be on top [laughs].

Vanessa: Why is that important?

Thandiswa: Mmm! Because our people who are coming must see that, yeah, it was great, the coffin, and everything was a good standard.

Extravagant spending on novelty items and 'modern' status symbols at funerals (new clothes and trendy accessories, cellphones, a fancy coffin, a videorecording) has become a new way to build the homestead, to ensure the satisfaction of the ancestors and to secure the position (the "good standard") of the family in the community. The new standards soon become norms that people feel compelled to comply with, because to do less would be to disgrace the family. Interviewees frequently observed that if they had held a less elaborate and costly ceremony, people would have accused them of not caring about their deceased family member. Such an accusation would presumably have further negative effects down the line, since the deceased person and other ancestors would not be pleased with a shabby performance and would not work towards securing the family's good fortune.

Funerals and spaces of desire

In her ethnography on funeral celebrations in Asante, Ghana, de Witte (2001:5–7) describes changes which bear a striking resemblance to some of the trends I have been describing in Hamburg:

In Ghana one sometimes gets the impression that people care more about their dead than about the living. The elaborate funeral celebrations during which no trouble or expenses are spared contrast sharply with the daily struggle for the primary necessities of life. [Funerals] are great public events, where families compete for prestige and respect by showing off wealth and by publicly conforming to norms of solidarity and respect for the dead . . . Funerals are, more than any other ceremony, only gaining more and more in scale and importance . . . [giving] rise to a hot debate in the media, in the churches and among people themselves about the disproportionate cost.

Drawing on Turner's concept of ritual as a space of liminality and anti-structure, de Witte suggests that funerals are a powerful time and space outside everyday life in which to create memory, reinscribe history and tradition, negotiate meanings and, importantly, explore ideals and desires (p. 12). In Ghana, extravagant consumption, particularly of Western goods, is an important status marker (cf. Rowlands 1996). The goods, de Witte (p. 127) argues, "symbolise a lifestyle . . . many people aspire to and are as such a materialisation of what it means to be modern and successful."

I find the notion of funerals as a space in which to explore and fulfil desires—particularly when real-life circumstances make the possibility of their true fulfilment maddeningly remote—to be very useful in considering people's motivations for 'putting on a good show' in Hamburg. As I have indicated, many of the spending/consumption trends are fuelled by practices and ideas brought back by relatives living and working the city. In both urban and rural environments, these practices and ideas—or spaces of desire—are increasingly shaped by mass media (particularly television) and popular culture. The influence of mass media in rural communities like Hamburg is by no means insignificant. In prayer meetings, many speakers brought into their speeches events such as 9/11, the 2004 Asian Tsunami, the Iraq War and Hurricane Katrina as signs of the precariousness of life in today's world. When talking about funerals, some interviewees raised the possibility of cremation as both a cheaper option and a way to address the current over-crowding of cemeteries (even though this is a distinctly urban problem). One also mentioned that the unpopular practice might yet catch on in Hamburg because "Brenda" (South African "bubblegum"¹¹³ artist Brenda Fassie) had been cremated. Mass

¹¹³ "Bubblegum" was an '80s township pop music style (Coplan 2005:12).

media and celebrity culture are playing an increasingly important role in shaping local notions of appropriate or desirable practice.

The quest for affluent, globalized lifestyles forms part of a “politics of aspiration” that is the hallmark of the new South Africa. Sarah Nuttall (2003:235–6) uses the term with reference to the Y generation (sometimes called the “Born Frees”), which she describes as one that “inscribes itself against, kicks loose from, X (the name given to the generation who fought in the anti-apartheid struggle and subsequently had difficulty finding a place in society).” The Y generation has been characterized by its political indifference and conversely keen interest in entertainment, personal identity and consumer culture (Masland 2004). Their music of choice is kwaito, a South African blend of a variety of genres including ’80s township pop (Bubblegum), UK/US house, hip hop, reggae and dance music (Peterson 2003). Coplan (2005:16) evocatively captures the spirit of the times in which the genre was born:

The music expressed and embodied the new sound for the post-struggle young black lions and lionesses¹¹⁴: a prideful, even predatory roar of pleasure hunting. In those first heady days the first freedom the youth demanded was to freely enjoy themselves Overtaking yet incorporating this now by-gone inspirational outlook, however, was a rampant materialism that accompanied the at times raw sexuality of early kwaito. It reflected the expectation of the black majority that the wealth that the white minority had enjoyed at their expense would now be made over to them. It had not yet become evident that the public cupboard was almost bare, and that the new ANC government’s political capacity to commandeer material resources would be employed primarily in the creation of a small black political and economic elite.

Coplan notes that with this growing disillusionment, kwaito has become more socially and politically engaged; however, the “modernist material aspirations” and “pleasure principle” (p. 21) that marked its birth continue to be its defining characteristics. In many

¹¹⁴ Township youth were referred to as “young lions” and “comrades” during the struggle (Coplan 2005: 16).

ways, freedom for black South African youth is indeed “the latest mobile” (MacGregor 2004).

“Modernist material aspirations” are not, however, restricted to the Y generation. Sonja Laden (2003:194) describes how consumer magazines for black South Africans of all ages are playing a key role in shaping black middle-class aspirations:

[C]onsumer magazines render meaningful, without always putting into action, a share repertoire of middle-class, everyday experiences, lifestyle options, and social practices. They are, then, documents or sources of data which represent aspired to, not necessarily given states of affairs, and it is their ‘evocative power’ . . . , and the power of the cultural commodities and beliefs they recommend, through which they provide valid ways for people to imagine . . . plausible alternative realities which may be structurally opposed to their existing reality.

Laden (p. 202) goes on to describe this middle-class ethos as embracing notions of liberal democracy and Western ideals of individual happiness and the common good; conventional affiliations of politics, race, class, and religion are discarded in favour of a “seemingly apolitical ‘bourgeois solidarity.’” The important point is that, for the majority, the vision is more fantasy than attainable reality and is largely out of sync with the country’s prevailing socio-economic climate. To a degree, the magazines confront these less rosy realities: for instance, Laden (p. 202) describes how one offered an ‘essential guide’ to help its readers cope with the all-too-common scenario of retrenchment and unemployment. In the main though, the goal is to create an image of the good life that speaks to black South Africans’ expectations of freedom, post-1994—expectations that, for the vast majority, have not been fulfilled. Popular local soap operas like “Generations,” which, as Miki Flockeman (2000:143) observes, present Thabo Mbeki’s call for an African Renaissance as “an already-achieved world of commercial success beyond debates around affirmative action and black empowerment,” similarly

shape this space of desire. Conspicuous consumption is one way people can inhabit these ideal worlds, can make the dream a tangible reality¹¹⁵. The trend might be fuelled by the younger generation, but it is embraced by older generations as well. It is no doubt part of the reason that people, in Mr. Mkani's words, have become "swanky", and funerals, one of the arenas in which their desires can be materialized:

Mr. Mkani: I think people are swanky now. Even the coffins are very expensive. People, though they don't have money, will have a very expensive coffin, unnecessarily.

Vanessa: Why?

Mr. Mkani: There's no reason for it; they are swanky. They want to be smart. Just like a person without money buying a very expensive suit. And yet he's earning far less than the suit. People like to live above their means. The same applies to these funerals.

As described in Chapter Five, funerals were a potent means for Black South Africans to oppose and at least symbolically repair the indignities and iniquities of colonialism and apartheid (Dennie 1997). I would suggest the current spending trend on funerals may, in part, be seen as a continuation and intensification of that historical trend, since political democracy has not thus far translated into material democracy. There are, however, other layers to the phenomenon that merit closer examination.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Ainslie (2005:196): "Many of the generation of younger rural men and women were intent on the decidedly modernist accumulation of commodities that their parents and grandparents were denied under the apartheid regime . . . [E]xpectations of modernity' on the part of the younger generation placed a premium on what they saw as burgeoning urban culture—tantalisingly within reach in the city of East London—and its (costly) icons of fashionable clothing and up-to-the-minute accessories like the latest-model cellular telephones, televisions, sound systems and even motor-cars. The cruel reality was that these expectations look set to be dashed, as the opportunities for any sustained upward mobility by the poorly educated majority of youth (other than by high-risk, illegal means) showed no signs of growing . . . *But this may only have increased the allure and aspirational nature of this sort of lifestyle.*" [Emphasis added]

Filtering ‘modernity’ through local interests

Practices of ‘modernity’ such as consumption and commercial enterprise are locally appropriated and transformed to suit existing cultural patterns of exchange and life values, which are in turn also transformed. (de Witte 2001:132)

(i) Women’s empowerment

Conspicuous spending on funerals and the types of prestige items that are bought and put on display do not only serve the broad purposes I have suggested, of materializing desires and repairing the indignities of apartheid; they also serve more local interests. In his analysis of commodity paths in rural Lesotho, James Ferguson (1992) draws on Appadurai’s (1986) processual and political approach to commodity exchange to explore how differently situated local actors seek to pursue (and battle out) their divergent interests. Ferguson (1992:64) identifies the dominant cultural order (in Appadurai’s terms, the “regime of value”) as the “prestige complex centering on livestock [i.e. grazing animals]”—which he elsewhere terms the “bovine mystique” (e.g. Ferguson 1985). This order is supported by men and the senior generation that stand to benefit from bridewealth payments in cattle. It is contested by the younger wage-earning generation, who want to have greater control over their money, and also by women.

Ferguson (1992) describes how for migrant labourers in Lesotho, investing in cattle is a way to tie up their money and keep it safe from the demands of wives and dependents, as livestock is governed by a “one-way barrier” norm that keeps it from being easily convertible to cash. At the same time, labourers who buy cattle earn prestige in the community, enhanced by whatever useful tasks their cattle might be put to. Women, however, challenge the “bovine mystique”:

Ideologically, they often challenge the “old-fashioned” value placed on accumulating livestock, praising instead the “modern” virtues of money and the things that it can buy . . . [W]here men work to preserve the path that keeps livestock partially separate from the world of commodity exchange through the one-way barrier, women as a category work to break down that barrier and to divert livestock into the realm of cash and consumer goods to which they have greater claims. (p. 64)

A very similar situation obtains in Peddie District. As Ainslie (2005, ch. 6) demonstrates, cattle continue to be an almost exclusively male domain, shoring up ‘traditional’ patriarchal values, and continue to be valued as a means to fulfill both the *masincedisane* and *ukwakh’umzi* norms. They also serve as “culturally resonant foil” for tying up money in the *umzi* and keeping it safe from the claims of girlfriends and mothers of their children (Ainslie 2005:188). Although some women might participate (from the sidelines) in the use of cattle to build the homestead, many, particularly those who head their own households, are finding alternative means to fulfil the *ukwahkh’umzi* norm. Similar to what Ferguson found, this strategy involves a preference for cash-based consumption (Ainslie, p. 195, 216).

To return briefly to the women’s buying clubs discussed in the previous chapter: two of the clubs, Mas’ncedane and Secret Pal, are devoted exclusively to the rotational purchase of expensive items for the home—for instance bedroom suites, wall units, sofas, TV cabinets, fridges—items that members feel they would not be able or willing to buy, were it not for the clubs (in both clubs, the pay-in amount is R200 per member). Recall, in the previous chapter, Thandiswa’s description of women’s initiative compared to men’s wasteful and irresponsible behaviour:

I said to you, women have a lot of initiative. They start and do things . . . and it helps. And whatever they do, most of the things they do, they always stand to have something. Unlike men, you know men just think of meeting at the shebeens

and that is the end of it . . . But with the women, really they've got plans of trying to have something that will keep them closer.

When I asked her what she meant by "something that will keep them closer," she elaborated, using her Secret Pal club as an example:

They are coming up with progress—be it for their families or for the community as a whole. Because really they are very . . . they start things that give development to them . . . They know that "Oh, this month we're going to so-and-so's house. We'll be giving her . ."—it's either money or presents. And it's how you see that, "I'm developing! I'm getting assisted out of this." Because you can't manage everything on your own; you might plan to do it, but you'll fail. But now that you join a particular club, you have to do it. You have to take that R200 and use it . . . At the end, it's helpful. So that's why I say, women can do this, but I've never seen anything organized by men; they are not progressive.

The tangible benefits of being a member of the club—having "money or presents"—are explicitly aligned with a discourse of modernization (being "progressive" and "developing" oneself). Similar to Ferguson's (1992) description cited above, it is in this way that women, according to Thandiswa, distinguish themselves from men. Their 'modern' projects of accumulation are not, however, distinct from 'traditional' cultural scripts, but are rather grafted onto them. Consider, for instance, Nowethu's description of how the activities of her Mas'ncedane club can be incorporated into *ukukhapa* or *ukubuyisa* ceremonies:

Nowethu: Mas'ncedane is also . . . they come when it's happy-go-lucky [a happy occasion], but they don't go so much for liquor. Mas'ncedane buys something. Like for instance that wall divider, Mas'ncedane bought me that.

Vanessa: Was it for a particular party?

Nowethu: Yes, it was a party here by me, but now instead of buying liquor, they buy you a present. So you just tell them what you want and then they will give you *imali* [the money]. If you've seen something, whether it's a lounge suite or whatever, you will tell them that you saw it at such-and-such a place. Then you, plus a member goes and buy it. So it's up to you whether you want them to buy it for you cash, or whether you would like them to give you the deposit, and then you make use of the rest of the money—that's all up to you, but they give you the money, that's all, you see. But it's also something . . . like for instance, you know you slaughter a cow for your husband after a year?

Vanessa: The *ukukhapa* ceremony?

Nowethu: Yes, for *ukukhapa*. So you'd slaughter a cow for your husband for *ukukhapa*. If you want to, you can ask the club, when you are "khaparing" your husband, that the club must come and join you. Then the club buys you whatever. Or you can, when you *ukubuyisa*, you can ask the club, you know, meet halfway with you, to give you half of the money . . . *but you must buy something that the club is going to see*. Like that room divider, when they came to see mine, it was covered, you cover it with a sheet or with a bedspread, then they come and they sing and we cook and mm-mm-mm-mm [she sways her hips, laughing], and then they open it and they see it. So you must at least buy something. [Emphasis added]

Nowethu's insistence that the club's gift be a tangible object that can be put on display for public recognition is important, because it is an integral part of building the homestead. Unveiling the room divider becomes an important ceremony in its own right. And just as investing in cattle is a legitimate way for men to 'tie up' money, because it builds the homestead's reputation, so spending—in particular ways—is coming to be seen in the same light¹¹⁶. When I asked Nolumanyano whether she and her sisters hadn't thought it wiser to save the money they spent on their mother's funeral for things like her grandchildren's education, she replied:

Yes, other families say, "When I'm dead, you mustn't waste your money, take a big, expensive coffin and bury me—that coffin is going to be rotten under the ground. Just keep that money for my children, so that they can go to school, they can eat, do whatever they want." But to us, we didn't see it like that If we keep the money, we are going to fight with it. Because when the money is invested in the bank, everyone wants to use that money.

For Nolumanyano, spending a lot on her mother's funeral was just as legitimate a strategy for building her homestead and preventing money-related conflicts as buying a cow in Ferguson's (1992) description. The obvious disadvantage is that her family would

¹¹⁶ Bank (2002:645) describes how women in another rural Eastern Cape community similarly transform their credit club meetings into a female (rather than normally male-dominated) beer drink: "By transforming quarterly credit club meetings into female beer drinks, the women of Mooiplaas were using an older cultural script to state a new kind of performance."

have nothing tangible left to show for the investment. However, as discussed earlier, she did not appear to be overly concerned about this, given her conviction that by spending in this manner, she had secured the blessings of her deceased mother.

As shown in the previous chapter, by closely adhering to the legitimate norms of *masincedisane* and *ukwakh'umzi* within the context of their buying clubs, work groups and church unions (*manyanos*), women are able to create spaces of self-empowerment behind a mask of conformity. This is particularly the case for the women in the buying clubs, who, it might be argued, have vested interests in the funeral 'spending trend,' onerous as the financial burden may be, since it affords them new avenues of power (their role in financing and organizing funerals is crucial). In the following section, I look at how rural families might similarly have interests in the spending trend, as a means to keep urban-based relatives materially and emotionally invested in the rural base.

(ii) Keeping urban-rural ties strong

Participation in 'modern' projects of consumption in the context of funerals serves another set of local interests; namely, maintaining the flow of resources from urban-based networks back to Hamburg. Both the *masincedisane* and *ukwakh'umzi* norms are again brought into play. As described in the previous chapter, varying degrees of punishment are inflicted on people who are seen to be failing to comply with *masincedisane* by staying away too long, particularly if their close relatives who have remained in the community do not (or are unable to) participate in other people's funerals or ritual events. The same principle applies within each family. As Lungiswa explained:

You see in the cases with these big families, people stay in town. They don't have a home here at Hamburg. In our culture, there's the thing that you have to go back

to your roots. So you have to go and ask for accommodation with your family. So if you stay in town and then you don't communicate with the people here in the village, one day you might need them. Who will accept you? Because you were once that somebody who didn't care about them, then who is going to care about you?

During apartheid, rural households in Peddie District were highly dependent on migrant earnings for survival, and family members working in urban areas had a vested interest in maintaining ties with the rural homestead as a fall-back option or place of eventual retirement. Although, as Ainslie (2005:103–106) describes, the structural parameters have significantly changed since 1994, both rural- and urban-based family members continue to have reasons for wanting to keep the rural-urban link strong. Migrant remittances have been steadily shrinking (partly on account of increased social welfare payouts since 1994); however, they continue to be one of the dominant livelihood strategies of rural households. (Recall that 74 (25%) of households in our HHEH Survey 2005 said they received remittances). Given the instability of the job market during the 1990s, urban dwellers with family in rural communities (particularly younger people who left for the cities in search of work) have found it important to maintain their place in these communities, which are seen as safer, more stable social environments. As Ainslie (2005:105) indicates, for many, “straddling” town and country is an attractive option (for instance, single mothers working in the city will often leave their children in the care of their rural-based grandparents).

Ainslie (2005:104) argues that, “in the face of a weakening rural economy, maintaining and even increasing their ‘entitlements’ to resources generated through the livelihoods of town-based *umzi* members and to the resources made available by urban-based state institutions, became the real and very necessary work of the people in rural

imizi.” He points out that while their efforts did not exactly amount to a deliberate ‘marketing strategy,’ their focus was to keep urban-based kin socially and materially invested in the rural homestead. He further contends that the primary mechanism for obtaining urban-rural transfers in the past (securing bridewealth payments from migrant labourers) is being substituted by rituals. Funerals are important in this regard, given the cultural preference for burying a person at his or her home village, as the rightful place of the ancestors, even if the person had not been living in the village for a long time (Mayer 1971:126). Furthermore, as indicated in Chapter Five, funerals involve a substantial transfer of resources and movement of people from town to country (Ainslie, p. 104, 241). Families holding funerals in Hamburg are very conscious of the impression made on “outside” visitors:

Thandiswa: People are doing the best things, because there will be visitors from the outside, so they must see that . . . even people who are poor can manage to organize; even if they are not a very recognized family—it’s really about showing to people that you can make it.

Recall a comment by Thandiswa, cited earlier in this chapter, on the “good standard” the family seeks to attain to impress outside kin: “our people who are coming must see that, yeah, it was great, the coffin, and everything was a good standard.” Clearly this standard has a lot to do with showing sophisticated and better-off urban visitors that the rural family “can make it,” is worth investing in. The symbols chosen to make this point are those that have weight in an urban setting—hence much of the “copy-catting” of the latest trends that several interviewees remarked on. At the same time, urban relatives are often drawn into paying a substantial proportion of the funeral costs in order to preserve the dignity of the rural homestead, in which they continue to have a stake. The funeral for the husband of one of my interviewees, for instance, was entirely paid for by

her sister-in-law who lives in a town several hours from Hamburg. As Mr. Mkani explained, relatives both near and far will donate what they can to “make the funeral a success . . . because you don’t want your family to be disgraced; it’s an obligation to save the name of the family.”

The rural-urban dynamics at play in Hamburg funerals bear interesting comparison with Smith’s (2004) discussion of burials in rural Igbo communities in Nigeria, where, as in Asante, Ghana (de Witte 2001), funeral costs are seen to be spiraling out of control. Smith describes how processes of neoliberal economic reform and democratization in Nigeria have brought about substantial changes in rural-urban dynamics. Rural Igbo families are finding it increasingly difficult to make a living entirely from farming, and factors such as formal education, exposure to global media and daily contact with Nigeria’s elite class have “raised expectations and ambitions well beyond subsistence” (Smith 2004:570). The result has been a high degree of rural-urban mobility as well as a growing interdependence between urban and rural kin, expressed through intensified patron–client relationships. Funerals are one arena in which many of the tensions in these unequal relationships—enmeshed in the wider transformations of Nigeria’s political economy—are played out. As in South Africa, being buried “at home” in the rural village is of great importance to rural-urban migrants. Urban-rural patron–client relations play a key role in mobilizing the considerable resources that have become necessary for a “successful funeral”:

The dynamics of the relationship between urban patrons and rural clients that play out in Igbo burials reflect the ways in which inequality is intertwined with a morality of reciprocal obligation that characterizes kinship relations. Families who must bury their dead rely on wealthy relations and other patrons to fulfill social expectations to perform grand burials. For patrons, burials are ideal–typical cases of the manner in which prestige is generated through an obligatory sharing

of one's wealth with one's clients. For the wealthy urbanites, burial ceremonies are opportunities to ensure continued identity with the place of origin, solidify political bases, display their achievements, and bask in the recognition of being successful . . . For the poor, especially in the village communities of the deceased, burial ceremonies are chances to enjoy a moment of conspicuous redistribution of resources. Inherent in the dynamics of the whole enterprise is a great ambivalence, as burials exemplify and lay bare the intertwining of inequality and interdependence that characterizes clientilistic kinship in communities that extend across rural–urban boundaries. (Smith 2004:572)

The “morality of reciprocal obligation” which demands conspicuous spending and sharing of wealth in Nigeria’s climate of socioeconomic change and widening class differentials simultaneously smoothes over and underlines tensions tied to what Smith (2004:571) describes as the “fundamental contradiction in the patron-client structure of Igbo society . . . wherein people are both rewarded and resented for success” The dynamics are reminiscent of the ways in which, in Hamburg, the *masincedisane* norm of reciprocity is used to secure resources from urban kin and ensure their redistribution, at the same time serving the ends of the *ukwakh’umzi* project, which is focused on building prestige and commanding respect. As in the Igbo context, rural and urban family members have their respective stakes in the undertaking, and both understand the rules involved. The result is a complex balancing act which manages, to a point, to contain and defuse latent tensions resulting from growing social inequalities (cf. Geschiere 2005).

Paying last respects: the ambiguous symbolism of money

As suggested at the outset of this chapter, funerals—more specifically, the amount of money that is spent on them—are a source of profound ambivalence in South Africa as a whole. In rural communities like Hamburg, the tensions and ambivalences are voiced as an uneasy relationship between ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’, urban and rural resources and

values, younger and older generations. Not explicitly related to the expense issue, but certainly an integral part of it, are changing gender roles—women staking out new territories for themselves, men finding their culturally sanctioned positions of authority to be both symbolically and materially under threat. Some of the people I interviewed, like Nolumanyano, actively embraced the current manner of conducting funerals, which she saw as part of profound material changes that have permeated all aspects of people's lives. Those who advocated a return to past practices were, in her view, simply deluding themselves:

Before [at funerals], we didn't have anything, just a slice of bread and black coffee, no milk, but now it is a lot. And because the time is changing, we can't rely on the old days. It was OK, but now we can't rely, we can't go back and look at them. Because even what you are wearing—we are not wearing the stuff the people of the old times were wearing. And people are not healthy like the old people—they're coming from far to the funeral. They're diabetic and hypertension—they need to have something good to eat. But some people want to go back to our culture. I went to a meeting with the pastors in Peddie, the stakeholders of the churches. Some of the pastors said, "No, let us go back," because they said there's no discipline on the funerals today.

This view was echoed by Mr. Sangwane who, although he was critical of the financial burden funerals placed on families, recognized that it was a new reality people would have to face rather than attempt to escape:

Vanessa: What do you think about the fact that funerals are so expensive and that people buy all these extra things like flowers and music?

Mr. Sangwane: It is alright, because, you see everything has changed, the people have already changed now. They can't go back to what was by the time of their grandfathers and grandmothers. Now they are in a new world.

The majority of people I interviewed, however, were far more resistant to what they perceived as perplexing changes. Combined with their highly critical stance was a nostalgic desire to turn the clock back. Unlike Nolumanyano, Nosebenzile saw no justification for spending a lot on a parent's funeral and leaving nothing for the children:

Nosebenzile: Oooh, these funerals now! I think we must move back, but I don't know how. Because it's better those funerals that we had before. You see, Vanessa, it's bad, because when you've got a funeral these days, you're supposed to buy a cow. You've got no cow in the kraal. You buy that cow for R3,500, like I did. Now, you take all your money, spend it to those people here, cooking . . . you can't believe! The cost, the cost, the cost! . . . Even the coffin: they take those caskets . . . um-uh, um-uh, it's not good! They're wasting the money, because that thing is going to be under the ground, so why do the people do it? And you take all your money, your children get nothing. Some of them, you can see that, [puts on a pretentious voice] "Now I'm going to bury my parent with a casket." It's useless! You must help your parents the time they were alive. It's nonsense to do nothing for your parents and then when they die, you are going to take that casket. It's nonsense!

Vanessa: And why do you think people want to buy a casket?

Nosebenzile: I don't know, I think they're mad! Why do they do that, Vanessa? I don't know either.

Another interviewee, Xola, was critical not only of the spending trend, but of the funeral industry as a whole, which he saw as making sizeable profits on the backs of vulnerable people:

I would say they are out of control, these expenses, because when I paid for that coffin, I thought, I wonder why people are selling these things so very expensive like this. Because it was a very cheap coffin that I bought, but look at the amount that I paid for it. How do they price these things? They're making money out of crying people; they're going out of control. At least they've got to be fair.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, regional newspapers are awash with articles offering similar critiques of funeral costs, the funeral industry, and the long-term economic implications¹¹⁷. As suggested in Nolumanyano's remarks cited above, many church leaders are staunch critics of the current spending trend, advocating instead a revival of 'traditional' customs.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ E.g., "Lavish funerals eat up resources" (Ntombela-Nzimande 2000); "The killing cost of burying our dead" (Moore 2003); and "The final injury" (Ntombela-Nzimande 2001).

¹¹⁸ An article titled "Churchmen slam burial feasts," for instance, describes how church ministers in Kwazulu-Natal are threatening to boycott funeral feasts to drive their message home. One minister mentioned the apparently forgotten Nguni custom of taking parcels or *iqhaga* to ceremonies to help the hosting family—a custom he felt should be reinstated (Rickard 2000).

Yet people continue to spend. All of the people I interviewed, no matter how poor or opposed in principle, mobilized all of their available resources to put on as ‘decent’ a funeral as possible. Clearly, there is a lot more than money at stake: it is nothing less than an effort to keep relationships and community intact, to find appropriate definitions and rules of ‘culture,’ in an environment of rapidly changing structural circumstances (cf. Norget 2006). I have argued that key to these relationships and definitions is the multi-layered notion of respect—a core value which encompasses a broad range of attitudes and actions. Money, in this context, has become a slippery, ambiguous symbol, which can simultaneously build and erode respect. As I have shown, the raising and spending of money is incorporated into the ‘traditional’ (and therefore legitimate) cultural norms of *masincedisane* and *ukwakh’umzi* in order to earn respect for individuals (those who cooperate appropriately); groups (the women who run the buying clubs, for instance); and homesteads (families that are able to afford their loved ones a dignified send-off). At the same time, many of these new patterns of spending are explicitly linked to an adoption of new, ‘foreign’ values and attitudes in the form of materialism, instrumentalism and indifference, all of which amount to a disturbing loss of respect and cherished cultural norms. Consider the following comments made by Mr. Sangwane:

Mr. Sangwane: Some people buy new clothes to wear when they come to a funeral, to show that they are decent people, but they don’t have respect at the funeral. They just want to show that they have nice clothes. Others, they come from the shebeens to the funerals. They don’t want listen to the person who’s standing there. They are just thinking they are going to have meat, you see: “I must go there and have my plate.”

Vanessa: Why do you think it’s become that way for some people?

Mr. Sangwane: You see, if my son doesn’t respect his home, he will do that to another home.

Vanessa: And why do you think there is this loss of respect for the home?

Mr. Sangwane: Eeh, it’s too difficult to explain that. But I’ve seen that everything is upside-down.

Vanessa: In what way?

Mr. Sangwane: Respect, no respect. People drink too much. They talk what they like to a big person. A big person talks what he likes to a young one. All these things, you see. They won't respect anything. Even they don't respect the church. In the oldest day, when you see preacher going in front of you in one road, you take off your hat, because you show him your respect. But in these days, you don't take it off, you pull it down, so you can't see their eyes. In these days, our children, they don't care about dying. You can tell them about . . . to die, you know, they don't care about that.

At the heart of the ambivalence is a renewed clash between two sets of norms and value systems, one 'Western,' the other 'African.' Interestingly, it is often the churches that are adopting a firmly Africanist stance. One newspaper article reports on a workshop organized by the KZN Christian Council of Churches, in which participating clergy "were challenged to bring back Africa to Africans by talking to their congregations about African values such as a sense of sharing, respect and looking after each other in a time of crisis." The program director had this to say about current funeral practices:

What is African is no longer clear because of colonisation, urbanisation and extravagance. After-tears parties are not African and nowadays when people attend a funeral they don't talk about the funeral but rather the kind of food they had and the type of coffin the deceased was buried in.¹¹⁹

In a similar vein, some of the people I interviewed explicitly tied disrespectful behaviour at funerals to Western/modernist values:

Thandiswa: You know the comments, the complaints about food? When you hear these people, you see that they have just lost the image of a funeral; they don't know what a funeral is all about, because there's this . . . we are more civilized now. I'm not sure if it's a Western thing.

¹¹⁹ "Funerals 'have lost their dignity'" (Khumalo 2002). Compare to the following observation in another article: "Apart from the expensive caskets, families splash out on catering, equipment (portable toilets, tents, and stoves), lavish feasts and even slaughter as many as two oxen and a sheep or two. The South African Council of Churches, which said this was not part of African culture, has slammed these lavish funerals ("Poor families spending a fortune on lavish funerals," Ramadikela 2003).

Exacerbating these fundamental tensions is South Africa's most formidable challenge of all: the relentless HIV/AIDS epidemic. In the following section, I look at how the funeral spending trend, fuelled by a complex range of historical and recent structural factors, the source of competing interests and profound ambivalences, intersects with this insidious disease.

HIV/AIDS: silences and costs

In such a bad time, people, a time when our parents are burying us; in such a bad time, people, of an incurable disease . . . every day I say this: "In whom will we trust?" In Jesus Christ, because the son of David says the seven seals have been opened. The time of playing is gone. Do you hear me, people? (Woman speaking at a prayer meeting) [Trans.]

As has been widely documented, HIV/AIDS continues to be subject to significant taboos and silences in South Africa (Leclerc-Madlala 2001). The situation has improved in recent years, particularly as leaders like Nelson Mandela have taken a stand and made public the ways the disease has affected their own families (Comaroff 2007). For many, however, particularly in rural communities, the disease is seen to bring shame to the family, mainly on account of its association with promiscuity¹²⁰. In conformity with the *ukwakh'umzi* norm, the tendency is to ignore the disease publicly:

Nolumanyano: The thing is, talking about HIV/AIDS when the person is dead—it's not easy. Some families don't want it. It depends on the family. Some think that if you talk about the person dying of HIV/AIDS, you spoil their family.

Vanessa: Why is that?

¹²⁰ When people in Hamburg were less well-informed about modes of HIV transmission, people were not only afraid of the family's reputation being spoiled, but also of being ostracized should the disease come to light. Nolumanyano described how, in 2003, one of her relatives developed Kaposi's sarcoma lesions on his face and was shunned by others in the community: "When he went to the people when there was a party or an occasion, the people didn't accept him. When they give him something to drink like African beer, they look for another jug so he can't use this bucket they're using. If there's meat in the kraal, he must sit outside—they don't want to sit with him."

Nolumanyano: They think that when you have HIV, you like men too much. You are a prostitute.

Vanessa: And if you're a man?

Nolumanyano: The man is a playboy, with lots of girls.

The result is often a curious situation at funerals where everybody knows what the person died of, but it is expressly forbidden to say the word out loud (cf. Campbell et al. 2005).

Two of the funerals I attended were for patients from Hamburg's Keiskamma AIDS

Treatment health centre. Many of the people in attendance, including family members, were wearing AIDS ribbons and beaded brooches with the ribbon design. However, the

esokugula (speaker who talks about cause of death) in the one case cited "chest

problems" and in the other, "epileptic fits" as the cause of death. Nolumanyano noted that this was very common:

At one of the funerals, I found out nobody wanted to say anything about AIDS. The speaker for the family was talking about her and said she had headache and confusion [meningitis] and that was all—he sat down. And the people whispered and said "No, why are they hiding? We know she had AIDS. She got it in P.E.—somebody raped her.

Funeral speakers' scripts are often closely monitored by family members and there are sometimes conflicting opinions over what should and shouldn't be said. One interviewee told me about the time she was asked to speak at the funeral of a young woman who had died of AIDS. The woman's father wanted her to talk openly about the cause of his daughter's death with a view to warning those present about the dangers of unsafe sex. When she duly did so, one of the man's sisters began shouting at her and tried to physically assault her for dishonouring the family.

Given the sensitive nature of the issue, pastors are not at liberty either to address the problem head-on in their concluding sermons. Often, they will couch it in

euphemisms, even as they address the issue of denial. The following is an excerpt of the sermon given at the funeral of the young woman who died of “epileptic fits”:

This thing is finishing us [*le nto iyasigqiba*]. We are all dying. The problem is that we are in denial. You cannot be treated if you’re in denial. I have seen people getting sick, but still denying. There were sangomas¹²¹ who could heal people before, but God chased them. The only good sangoma now is God. If we can be honest with God and believe in Him, we will get healed of this big thing [*lento unkhulu*] through His words. We are all sick, but we have to admit it. [Trans.]

A hospice worker I spoke to after this funeral was furious about the pastor referring to AIDS as “this thing”:

Why?! People are still whispering about AIDS instead of talking freely about it. How can we help people if they don’t talk openly? People are dying! Now they won’t care so much because they think X was sick but not from HIV.

At another funeral I attended, this time for an old woman who died of natural causes, the pastor felt at liberty to explicitly address the issue of HIV/AIDS. The theme of his sermon was “readiness” and his point seemed to be that one cannot get away with shirking responsibilities (including the responsibility, presumably, to practice safe sex). Along the way, he criticized the erosion of cultural/moral values associated with practices like circumcision. His overall conclusion, however, seemed more fatalistic than anything else:

We all have this virus, HIV. We are all going to die, even if you pray like anything. Even if you use pills, you are going to die. You can’t buy your way to heaven like a driver’s licence [i.e. with bribes]. People of this world like to pay for stolen goods. But when the whistle blows, at the time of death, you don’t have energy to run away. People living now are not ready for death . . . Before you go to circumcision, you know nothing. When the *incibi* [surgeon] finishes the circumcision, the elder says to you, “*Ithi ndiyindoda!*” [Say, “I am a man!”] The initiates learn a lot of songs. But even after going through all that, they are not ready to live an adult life. They tend to live like boys . . . Men and women like to have children out of wedlock [*masihlalesane*]. Most fathers are not ready to be fathers; they do not support their children. You can have a CV listing all of your qualifications, but you might not yet be ready to work. You might not arrive on

¹²¹ A sangoma is a traditional healer.

time; you might not work on Mondays because of *babelaas* [a hangover] I believe we are going to see God again. Be saved, because God is coming. [Trans.]

This end-of-the-world type of fatalism linked to moral dissolution was a very common theme at funerals. As indicated by the excerpt from a prayer meeting cited at the beginning of this section, the Book of Revelations was a popular source of inspiration for speeches at prayer meetings, combined with apocalyptic scenarios gleaned from newspapers and, particularly, TV. Several interviewees more or less explicitly linked AIDS to their general impression, in Mr. Sangwane's words, that the world "is upside-down" (cf. De Boeck 2005). In criticizing the extravagant amounts people spend on funerals, for instance, Nosebenzile said:

It's not important to be killing a cow. I think that's why we die too much, Vanessa. Those things we did. I think God is cross with us. We are dying too much, we Xhosa people. The funeral is a wedding today. It's not nice; I don't like it.

After describing the various ways in which people today are lacking in respect (see above), Mr. Sangwane concluded:

But God is sorting everything. His word is going to be one . . . to all these things happening. Because the Bible tells us there will be terrible sicknesses. And I agree, because all these things I've seen with my own eyes. And these terrible earthquakes from other countries, the Bible already told us that we would hear all those things. Nobody will cure those sicknesses, only God. This sickness of AIDS is the disease that nobody can cure. The Bible already told us about that.

Campbell et al. (2005:813) observe that the "[vigorous] linking [of] sexual transgressions and AIDS with sin, immorality, and, sometimes, even the end of the world" is a strategy on the part of many church representatives to regain lost moral authority in the face of the ever-rising rates of infection among South Africa's young people. While, as my conversations with Nosebenzile and Mr. Sangwane suggest, the message finds resonance

with older generations, it appears to have very little impact on its target audience.

Certainly, at many of the funerals I attended, the young people did not seem remotely interested in the preachers' expostulations, but tended to sit in the back, chatting amongst themselves. The amount of death in people's lives in South Africa creates a strong sense of inevitability across the generations. Middle-aged church goers might find comfort and resignation in doomsday scenarios; for many of the young people at the epicentre of the tragedy, blasé indifference coupled with a *carpe diem* approach to life masks a troubled present and basic lack of faith in the future.

The spending on funerals described in this chapter play into these different currents of fatalism in different ways. Short-term, extravagant projects of consumption are entirely appropriate when life is seen to be short and precarious. In this sense, they are a strong form of denial. However, I would argue that they can also be seen as desperate bid for normalcy. Just as spending makes 'real' an economic democracy that has yet to materialize, so it masks the true devastation of AIDS, creating a veneer of 'life going on,' of victory against all odds. The tragedy, of course, is that the extravagant spending on funerals further erodes limited household incomes, leaving orphaned children and (often) their grandparents in even worse financial straits. As I have indicated, people in Hamburg are very much aware of this problem, yet my sense was they were not sure, at this particular juncture, what else to do. Holding a dignified funeral was at least a valiant attempt to salvage something from what, for many, seems to be a hopeless situation.

FINAL THOUGHTS

FUNERALS AND SOCIAL IDIOMS OF COMMUNITY

“This, after all, is a postcolony whose government, the African National Congress (ANC), is trying to fashion a highly enlightened democracy under the banner “One Law for One Nation” and yet, at the same time, to free itself from a legacy of Eurocentric domination; a postcolony rooted in a modernist culture of legality that seeks, explicitly if uneasily, to make space for cultural diversity and customary authority” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2004)

“How do we reconcile a democracy, which promises new life to all, with an epidemic that is inflicting new mass death upon its citizens?” (Posel 2004:311–12)

I conducted fieldwork in Hamburg after a decade of democracy in South Africa. As described in Chapter Four, in that ten-year period, the country has undergone enormous and rapid changes. Thabo Mbeki, who is serving his second term as President, has outlined his vision for South Africa in terms of an “African Renaissance”¹²². As Tom Lodge (2003:228–30) describes it, this discourse embraces two visions, one of resolute modernity, the other of cultural heritage. The first sees South Africa, in collaboration with its regional partners, as taking its place on the world stage through technological advancement, liberal democratic governance and free market economics. The second,

. . . suggests that the impersonal forces of modern bureaucracies, international markets and electronic technology can somehow be humanised and adapted to African needs. This is a renaissance in which African communities succeed in reconstructing themselves around tradition, legacy and heritage, around the values and relationships that characterised pre-colonial institutions and values. (p. 230)

¹²² Mbeki used the term in a parliamentary address in 1997, where he spoke of “the obligation to contribute to the common African continental effort, at last, to achieve an African Renaissance, including the establishment of stable democracies, respect for human rights, an end to violent conflicts, and a better life for all peoples of Africa” (Lodge 2003:227).

Much of the focus on this second interpretation has been the philosophical/moral concept of *ubuntu*—the notion that a person can only realize his or her humanity through relationships with others. As the Xhosa proverb goes, *umntu ngumntu ngabanye* (“a person is a person through others”).

Not least among the challenges in this nation-building process is the HIV/AIDS epidemic. As is well known, in the years following 1994, the ANC government, particularly under the leadership of Thabo Mbeki, adopted a variety of baffling positions on the disease and made public health decisions that caused outrage and disbelief, both at home and abroad. To review some of the key points in the controversy¹²³: in 1997, Mbeki, then co-Deputy President, touted the merits of Virodene as a cheap, home-grown cure for AIDS. The drug was soon revealed to be highly toxic. After becoming President in 1999, Mbeki began to research the views of a group of ‘AIDS dissidents’ who questioned the causal relation between HIV and AIDS, as well as the efficacy of antiretroviral treatment, emphasizing, rather, that AIDS was a ‘lifestyle disease’ caused by poverty and malnutrition. In response to civil disobedience campaigns mounted by the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) (an advocacy organization founded in 1998), Mbeki refused to speak publicly about the disease or to grant interviews to reporters. Instead, his Health Minister, Dr Manto Tshabalala-Msimang—nicknamed “Dr No” and “Dr Beetroot”—actively promoted olive oil, lemon, beetroot, garlic and African potato as effective means to combat the disease—more affordable than expensive Western drugs and therefore more appropriate in the South African context. In his opening speech for the 13th International AIDS Conference, hosted in Durban, South Africa from July 9 to 14, Mbeki declared extreme poverty to be “the world’s biggest killer,” adding that “we

¹²³ For more comprehensive accounts, see Power (2003), Hoad (2005) and van Rijn (2006).

could not blame everything on a single virus” (Mbeki 2000b). In 2002, the Constitutional Court compelled the ANC to provide the drug Nevirapine to HIV-positive pregnant women to curb mother-to-child transmission. The same year, the government officially acknowledged that HIV causes AIDS, and in November 2003, the government finally approved a country-wide roll-out of antiretrovirals (although it continued to endorse a “broad” treatment strategy, which gave equal weight to nutrition and vitamin supplements)¹²⁴.

Mbeki has framed his defiant stance on HIV/AIDS and related public health policies in terms of an Africanist critique of colonial and apartheid-era racism and oppression, as well as contemporary Western imperialism. In a letter addressed to Clinton, Blair and other world leaders (dated April 3, 2000), he clarified his position:

It is obvious that whatever lessons we have to and may draw from the West about the grave issue of HIV-AIDS, a simple superimposition of Western experience on African reality would be absurd and illogical. Such proceeding would constitute a criminal betrayal of our responsibility to our own people. I am convinced that our urgent task is to respond to the specific threat that faces us as Africans. We will not eschew this obligation in favour of the comfort of the recitation of a catechism that may very well be a correct response to the specific manifestation of AIDS in the West. We will not, ourselves, condemn our own people to death by giving up the search for specific and targeted responses to the specifically African incidence of HIV-AIDS. I make these comments because our search for these specific and targeted responses is being stridently condemned by some in our country and the rest of the world as constituting a criminal abandonment of the fight against HIV-AIDS Not long ago, in our own country, people were killed, tortured, imprisoned and prohibited from being quoted in private and in public because the established authority believed that their views were dangerous and discredited. We are now being asked to do precisely the same thing that the racist apartheid tyranny we opposed did, because, it is said, there exists a scientific view that is supported by the majority, against which dissent is prohibited. (Mbeki 2000a)

¹²⁴ In 2003, the Dutch vitamin company, the Matthias Rath Foundation, was permitted to conduct an advertising campaign emphasizing the benefits of vitamins and the supposedly harmful side-effects of ARVs, which caused considerable confusion among many patients on the drugs (Miles 2005).

In this view, as Jean Comaroff (2007:214) suggests, “AIDS marks the impact on African immune systems of the living legacies of imperialism . . . [R]emedies lie less in costly or hazardous drugs, which prolong neocolonial dependency, than on the reversal of inequality.” In his opening speech at the Durban conference, Mbeki underlined the fact that most of the conference attendees were from “outside our Continent” and would not have the opportunity to “see the South African and African world of the poverty . . . in which AIDS thrives” (Mbeki 2000b). Underscoring the global inequities that account for vastly different life expectancies in developed and developing countries, he invited his (privileged) international guests to help find solutions adapted to the African context. As in his letter to Clinton et al., he defended his search for alternative viewpoints on the disease on the grounds of tolerance and freedom of speech. As Neville Hoad (2005) demonstrates, another important component of Mbeki’s focus on the link between poverty and AIDS, as opposed to the sexual transmission of HIV, lies in his attack on colonial racism—specifically representations and treatment of African bodies and sexuality—the legacies of which remain alive and well.

South Africa’s HIV/AIDS controversy lays bare the complexities of a nation struggling to heal the material and symbolic wounds of the past and define itself, as Comaroff and Comaroff (2004) suggest, in an idiom of Afromodernity¹²⁵. Terms such as “Rainbow Nation,” “African Renaissance” and “the new South Africa” optimistically proclaim as *faits accomplis* what continue to be tortuous negotiations around pressing issues. Mbeki’s African Renaissance ideology dovetails his party’s GEAR policy which

¹²⁵ Comaroff and Comaroff (2004:198) define Afrodmodernity as “a labile, more or less self-conscious ensemble of signs and practices, dispositions and discourses, theories and forms of knowledge, with reference to which a specifically African sense of the contemporary is being fashioned—is assuming its place in a world of liberal modernities.”

is aimed at securing a place for South Africa in the global economy. When applied to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, however, the ideology is used to mount a postcolonial, anti-imperialist critique: Africa will not submit to the hegemony of Western science or the interests of pharmaceutical giants. In both cases, the Renaissance is styled as the flowering of the liberation movement, and Mbeki, a revolutionary leader (Lodge 2003:248–9). Conversely, the anti-poverty and HIV/AIDS activist groups protesting against ANC policies explicitly frame their new fight for constitutional/human rights in terms of the principles of the anti-apartheid struggle their government leaders are seen to have betrayed¹²⁶.

As Huntingdon and Metcalf (1979:2) suggest, death and rituals of commemoration can throw into sharp relief the most important values by which people evaluate their experiences (in Norget's 2006 terms, they forge a "social idiom of community.") They can also lay bare the fault lines of key political struggles—within a community, within a country. In either case, the emotional trauma of death considerably raises the stakes of these reflexive cultural performances. In this thesis, I have explored the ways in which funerals in the predominantly Xhosa-speaking rural community of Hamburg both reflect and speak to the difficult discursive, structural and biophysical realities of the new South Africa. Taking as my point of entry what, from my outsider's perspective, seemed a perplexing degree of expenditure in a context of relative scarcity, economic uncertainty and high mortality, I have shown how funerals actively engage these new realities as they commemorate the many lives that continue to be lost.

What emerged as both a core value and point of considerable tension in my fieldwork and review of the literature and media commentary on funerals was the multi-

¹²⁶ See, for instance, the Durban Social Forum Declaration, cited in Desai (2002:150–53).

layered notion of respect. Dennie's (1997) analysis shows that the history of Black funerals in South Africa since the early 1900s has been one of opposition to the indignities of colonialism and apartheid—a way to provide, in death, the respect that was not accorded in life. South Africa's transition to democracy coincided with the explosion of HIV/AIDS—a disease that has been silenced in an effort to preserve respectability. As South Africa breaks out of its decades of isolationism to take its place on the world economic and political stage, the categories of 'tradition' and 'modernity' take on very different meanings from their artificial definitions under apartheid: how indeed, do *ubuntu* and Western categories of law, social organization and economics mesh (Comaroff and Comaroff 2004)? How to ensure that, in the process of forging new Afromodernities, basic values of respect (and which values?) are preserved? What are the terms of the dialogue? (Tomaselli 2003).

This thesis has been an attempt to explore these issues at the local level, in a rural community, where certain tensions—particularly between 'tradition' and 'modernity'—are no doubt higher than in urban milieus. Using as a framework the twinned Xhosa cultural norms of *masincedisane* (reciprocity) and *ukwakh'umzi* (building the homestead) (Ainslie 2005; McAllister 1986, 2001), I have examined the ways in which funerals are materially and symbolically constructed in a complex choreography of cohesion and disruption that both contains and explores the potentially liberating and disruptive aspects of the present.

Masincedisane builds social capital. As far as funerals are concerned, it is the standard for appropriate behaviour, in terms of attendance, participation and contributions, that acts as a social glue which keeps the community together and ensures

cultural continuity, binding individuals and homesteads in relationships of mutual assistance and indebtedness for the long term. *Masincedisane* also informs the modus operandi of the informal burial and buying clubs that cover a large proportion of funeral costs. At the same time, it is key to building the status of the homestead which, in turn, is key to obtaining ancestral favour. In the name of *ukwakh'umzi*, rural households are embracing a variety of potentially disruptive symbols associated with wealth, 'modernity' and urban middle-class lifestyles. In the context of funerals, this means having, at minimum, a coffin and service that conform to a basic standard, and, ideally, a variety of add-ons in the form of special flower arrangements, a PA system, video-recordings, and so on. The type of guests in attendance can substantially add to the status of the event—those who arrive from the city in shiny new cars with expensive clothing and the latest cell phones demonstrate the importance of the homestead and the material resources it can potentially access. As I have suggested, this consumptive pursuit of wealth in part speaks to the ongoing material inequalities that are a legacy of apartheid.

The *masincedisane* norm both enables this pursuit of Western-style materialism and keeps it in check. Whereas consumption in the West is focused on the gratification of individual desires, conspicuous spending and consumption in the Xhosa (African) context must be geared toward the collective well-being of a family/household that is, in turn, part of a community. In countries undergoing processes of neoliberal economic reform and democratization, rituals such as funerals serve to smooth over the potentially disruptive forces that can be brought into play by growing material inequalities, often manifested through a widening urban-rural divide (cf. Ainslie 2005; Geschiere 2005; Norget 2006; Smith 2004). At the same time, ritual serves as a space to explore new

realities. As I have argued in Chapter Six, the *masincedisane* and *ukwakh'umzi* norms afford women in rural communities like Hamburg safe (because 'traditional' and legitimate) spaces in which to explore new forms of power: whether as solidarity in the face of the commonplace forms of violence against women, or as new forms of gender identity gained through material successes.

At stake in funerals in Hamburg are questions of value(s), notably respect. By what means is the status of a household measured? What are the correct ways of thinking and acting? How do members of a rural community, fractured by the politics of the past and confronted by the plague of the present, take their place in the new South Africa? The ambivalence of people I interviewed regarding contemporary funerals—particularly on the topic of respect—indicates the degree to which the answers to these questions are, at present, unclear. Their ambivalence in some ways mirrors the difficulties in Mbeki's vision of an African Renaissance. In the postcolonial, post-apartheid era, the dignity of those relentlessly stripped of their basic human rights and possibilities for advancement must be regained. Intellectual, technological and material successes on the world stage are key. However, such goals are associated with systems and values that might be incommensurable with 'traditional' African values such as *ubuntu*.

The types of spending/consumption patterns and tensions I have described in this thesis (often framed as a clash between 'tradition' and 'modernity') resonate with other examples from the ethnographic literature on contemporary funerals and other rituals in Africa (e.g., de Witte 2001; Kratz 1993; Smith 2004; Van der Geest 2006), suggesting that they are part of continental processes of postcolonialism and globalization. What I have described in Hamburg is inscribed with these larger processes but is also specific to

the South African context. The material associations with respect and dignity in life and death have a particular emotional charge in the context of the country's history of apartheid.

This study is intended as a snapshot, a detailed portrait of a moment in time. The manner of conducting funerals in Hamburg and across South Africa will no doubt change as families are simply not able, even with all the creative strategies they have in place, to carry the financial burden any longer. At the same time, the course of the epidemic will be significantly altered as more and more people are started on ARV therapy. For the time being, however, the costly, 'decent' funeral, in the face of widespread mortality, remains a reality and a statement. It is a statement that suggests many things: denial of the devastation of AIDS; compensation for disappointed dreams; a desperate bid to affirm normalcy in a world that is "upside-down"; an attempt to enact cultural norms and values that are increasingly absent, or to adapt them to a rapidly changing present. But it is also a message of hope and resilience—a sign that people have not lost faith in the future and, most importantly, in each other.

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APPENDIX 1 – CHURCHES IN HAMBURG

AMEC (African Methodist Episcopal Church)
Ambassadors (Gospel)
Amaqina (Life) – Zion
Alpha God Christian Church
Assembly Christian Church
Bantu Church of Christ
Gospel Church ("ingena endlini yakhe" [enter inside the house])
Gospel Christian Church
Healing Assembly of God
New Christian Church of Zion
Old Apostolic Church
Seventh Day Adventist
United African Church
Wisile (Methodist)
Zion Apostolic Convert
Zion Bantu Healing
Zion Creation Church
Zion Healing
Zion Holy Christian Church
Zion Messiah Christian Church
Zion New Jerusalem
Zion Prince of Peace
Zion Sabbath Church of Christ

APPENDIX 2 – HHEH 2005 SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

HAMBURG HOUSEHOLD ECONOMICS AND HEALTH SURVEY 2005

Date: _____ Time: _____ Interview no. _____ Signed consent form: _____

Name of interviewer: _____

Name of interviewee (optional): _____ Age: _____

SECTION 1: HOUSEHOLD ECONOMICS

1. How long have you and your family been living in Hamburg? _____

2. Description of household

Erf # (optional)			
Number of houses on property			
Size of each house (number of rooms)			
Type(s) of house(s) (rondavel, shack, brick, stone)			
Extent of property (hectares)?			
Owned / rented Title deed: YES / NO	Monthly property rates:	Monthly rent:	
Vegetable garden: YES / NO	Size:		
Domestic animals and number:	PIGS:	CHICKENS:	COWS:
	Pig sty:	Fowl run:	Kraal:
	YES / NO	YES / NO	YES / NO

Amenities	Description
Water	Indoor tap / outdoor tap
Geyser	YES / NO
Toilet	Flush / VIP / latrine
Electricity	YES / NO
Telephone	Land line / Cell phone (no. of phones):
Cooking facilities and percentage of use:	a) Electric stove (%); b) gas stove (%); c) paraffin heater (%); d) paraffin stove (%); e) wood (%)
Fridge	YES / NO
Electronics	Radio, TV, CD player, VCR, DVD player, computer

3. Household costs

Item	Cost per month
Electricity	
Water rates	
a) Gas; b) paraffin; c) wood	a) b) c)
Telephone	
Groceries	
Cleaning products (soap, washing powder . . .)	
Transport (taxi fares for all household members living in Hamburg)	
Monthly payments for credit / hire purchase / lay-by / accounts (specify):	
Item	Cost per month

Credit clubs (<i>imibuto</i>) (specify):	
Monthly payments for funeral insurance / burial club (specify):	
Other (e.g. monthly contributions to church) (specify):	
Debt: a) water: R b) rent: R c) funeral insurance: R d) other: R	Total:

4. Description of the adults and children living in this household (i.e. in Hamburg). Include interviewee:

Relationship to interviewee	Age	Sex	Monthly income (see codes 1 – 9)*	Source (e.g. wages, grants, sales) Specify type of work, grant, selling activity	% of income given to household	Education level	Health problems	ID docs	Bank or P.O. account

(*Monthly income: 1 = R0.00; 2 = R0 – R500; 3 = R500 – R1,000; 4 = R1,000 – R2,000; 5 = R2,000 – R5,000; 6 = R5,000 – R10,000; 7 = R10,000 – R20,000; 8=R20,000 – R30,000; 9= R30,000+)

5. What church(es) do the members of your household belong to? (Specify which member(s) belong to which church.)

6. How many people belong to the household but live outside Hamburg? _____

7. Who are they (relationship to interviewee, age)? _____

8. Where do they live? _____

9. How often do they come to visit? _____

10. Do any of these family members send money to support your household? If so, who sends and how much does each person send per month?

11. How do your family members keep up with the news and current events in the Eastern Cape and South Africa as a whole? (Newspaper / magazines / TV / radio / conversations)

SECTION 2: HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

12.

- a. If someone in your family had HIV/AIDS, would you be happy for them to eat with the same utensils as you?
- b. Would you buy food from someone who has HIV/AIDS?
- c. If a teacher in a school has HIV/AIDS, should they be allowed to continue working as a teacher?
- d. Do you think that people with HIV/AIDS deserve it because they are responsible for their illness?
- e. Are there people in your neighbourhood that are open about being HIV- positive?
- f. Are people in your neighbourhood unkind to people with HIV/AIDS?
- g. If a member of your family became infected with HIV, would you

Yes	No	Don't Know

want it to remain a secret?

- h. If someone has AIDS, do you think that antiretrovirals can help make them better?
- i. Do you think that it is possible to tell if someone is HIV-positive by looking at them?

13. What do you think a social worker's job involves? _____

14. If you had a problem in your family, would you visit the social worker in Hamburg? Why or why not?

15. Please describe any deaths that have occurred in your household over the past 10 years (i.e. between 1995 and 2005).

Year of death	Relationship of person to interviewee	Age	Sex	Place of death	Illness	Which health workers were consulted and describe the care received

16. Are you happy with the health services in Hamburg and what changes would you like to see?

17. What would be the best ways to improve life in Hamburg? _____

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation!!

APPENDIX 3 – HHEH 2005 SURVEY LETTER



UMTHA WELANGA HIV/AIDS TREATMENT CENTRE
A Division of the Keiskamma Trust

September 6, 2005

Mr. Ras
SANCO Chairman
Hamburg
5641

Dear Mr. Ras,

We are writing to inform you of a Hamburg Household and Health Survey we are designing, for which we are seeking community approval. The survey consists of a 4-page questionnaire, a draft copy of which we are attaching to this letter. As you will see, the questions mainly revolve around household incomes and expenses, household composition, and health-related problems and needs, with particular reference to HIV/Aids.

Our goal is to implement the survey by having five research assistants visit (in pairs or alone) every single house in Hamburg to interview a household member and fill out the questionnaire. We would like to underline from the outset that people are **under no obligation** to answer any questions they do not want to; the exercise is entirely voluntary. When a household member agrees to be interviewed, he or she will be given a consent form to sign. This form ensures that all of the information disclosed to the interviewer will remain completely confidential. In addition to the five research assistants, only the people on the research team identified below will have access to this information. At no point in the research process will people's names or any other identifying information be disclosed. All members of the research team will sign contracts clearly stipulating the rules of confidentiality they must adhere to.

Our goals in designing and implementing this survey are several:

- Those directly involved in health care and social service delivery want to get a sense of the needs of the community. Too often, individuals remain invisible or "slip through the cracks" and do not receive the care and / or services they are entitled to. The survey will allow us to identify these individuals and improve health care and social service delivery in Hamburg.
- The Keiskamma Trust is continually applying for funding for health, art and youth initiatives. In reviewing applications for funding, potential sponsors want as much factual information on the community as possible. If we are able to present them with a set of up-to-date statistics on demographics, income and health, we stand a far better chance of securing the funding we apply for.
- The compiled survey results will be made available to everyone in the community, as well as visitors from the outside. These, to name a few, include researchers, tourism developers, investors and government officials. The survey will therefore constitute a valuable resource for everyone interested in understanding and improving life for all in the Hamburg community.

c/o ESIBONELELA GENERAL DEALER P.O. HAMBURG, EASTERN CAPE, 5641
TEL/FAX 040 678-1163, EMAIL UMTHAWELANGA@GLOBAL.CO.ZA
Trust Reg. # IT 840/2003, Section 18a Reg. 039-285-NPO

September 6, 2005

Last year, one member of our research team conducted a similar survey in Lover's Twist, with excellent outcomes. Most of the people interviewed were very happy to finally be "put on the map" and, as a result, many of the health and social problems in the community are finally being addressed. We believe our Hamburg survey will have similar positive outcomes.

We present this project to you for review by the SANCO committee. We would like the committee to present the project at a community meeting at which we will be present to answer any questions or concerns community members may have. We are looking forward to hearing your response.

Sincerely,

Research team:

Carol Baker, MD

Graeme Hofmeyr, Umtha Welanga Project Coordinator

Vanessa Nicolai, Researcher

Eunice Mangwane, HIV/AIDS Counsellor

Annika Petersen, Social Work Trainee

Research assistants:

Liberty Mapuma

Nombasa Khondleka

Nonzame Solwandle

Gladys Makubalo

Nqatyiswa Golela

APPENDIX 4 – CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FOR HHEH SURVEY 2005 TEAM

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

This is to state that I, _____ (FULL NAME) am participating as a RESEARCHER / RESEARCH ASSISTANT in the **Hamburg Household Economics and Health Survey** being conducted by the Keiskamma Health Project of Hamburg, from October 1 to November 30, 2005. The survey consists of a four-page questionnaire to be completed in on-site interviews.

A. PURPOSE

The objectives of the survey are as follows:

- ♦ To gather information on the economic, health and social service needs of the residents of Hamburg in order to improve service delivery in the community.
- ♦ To compile statistics in order to build a community profile for Hamburg. This information will be made available to the general public and may be used for a variety of purposes, e.g. proposals for funding, sponsorships and economic development.

B. PROCEDURE AND CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

A research assistant will visit every home in their assigned neighbourhood of Hamburg between the hours of 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. on weekdays and weekends. The research assistant will explain to the adult(s) present (age 25 years+) the nature, purpose and conditions of the survey, and will ask whether one household member is willing to participate. If a respondent agrees to participate, he or she will be read a consent form (in Xhosa or English) and will be asked for verbal consent. The research assistant will sign the consent form, attesting that verbal consent was given.

Each interview should last between 60 and 90 minutes. As explained in the consent form, respondents are free to withdraw their consent and discontinue their participation at any time without negative consequences. Respondents are free to answer or not answer any of the questions asked by the research assistant(s). Participation in this study is: CONFIDENTIAL (i.e. the researcher(s) or research assistant(s) will know, but will not disclose respondents' identity). Data from this study will be used to compile ANONYMOUS statistics on Hamburg. No information that could lead the identification of respondents (e.g. names, Erf numbers etc.) will be disclosed in the survey results.

Research assistants will keep completed questionnaires in a secure place. Every Friday morning, the research team will meet to discuss the week's activities. All completed questionnaires and signed consent forms will be delivered to Vanessa Nicolai who will lock them in a secure place. Data entry will be performed by members of the research team who have signed a confidentiality agreement.

I FULLY UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT AND I WILL ADHERE, AT ALL TIMES, TO THE TERMS OF CONFIDENTIALITY OUTLINED THEREIN.

DATE: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

APPENDIX 5 – CONSENT FORMS (ENGLISH/XHOSA) FOR HHEH SURVEY INTERVIEWS

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

*Hamburg Household and Health Survey
October to November 2005*

To the participant:

- ◆ Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions. We are doing this survey to find out about the economic, health and social service needs of the residents of Hamburg.
- ◆ We need this information to provide better services, and to apply for sponsorships and funding for different projects in Hamburg.
- ◆ Please feel free to answer or not answer the questions asked by the interviewer. If you choose not to answer the questions, this will not be held against you in any way.
- ◆ Any information you give will be CONFIDENTIAL (i.e. the interviewer will know, but will not disclose your identity to anyone outside the research team). Your name or any other identifying information will not be revealed in the results of the study.

I, THE INTERVIEWER, ATTEST THAT THE RESPONDENT FULLY UNDERSTANDS THIS AGREEMENT AND FREELY CONSENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

ERF NO.: _____

INTERVIEWEE: _____

DATE: _____

INTERVIEWER'S NAME (please print): _____

SIGNATURE: _____

ISIVUMELWANO SOKUBA YINXALENYE KUPHANDO LWE

Hamburg Household and Health Survey

October to December 2005

To the participant:

- ♦ Enkosi ngokuthatha ixesha lokuphendula le mibuzo. Senza umlinganiselo wokufumana lula malunga ngempilo, nangentlalontle, nentlupheko kunye nemfuno zabahlali base Hamburg.
- ♦ Sifuna oluphando luzise inkonzo ezingcono, nokuba sikwazi ukucela izipho nemali kwimisebenzi ayahlukileyo yethutyana eHamburg.
- ♦ Khululeka ngokuphendula okanye ungaphenduli namnye umbuzo njengoko kungekonto iyakuthiyenzeke kuwe.
- ♦ Naluphina ulwazi olinika umphandi liyakuthi LIBEYIMFIHLELO (liza kwaziwa ngumphandi yedwa.) Igama lakho kunye nayiphina inkcazelo oyinika umphandi azikuvezwa kwiziphumo zoluphando.

UMPHANDI UYAQINISEKISA UKUBA UYAQONDA NGOKUZELEYO
ESISIVUMELWANO OKUNYE UKHULULEKILE NGOKUTHATHA INXAXHEBA
KOLUPHANDO.

ERF NO.: _____

IGAMA (INTERVIEWEE): _____

UMHLA: _____

IGAMA LOMPHANDI (bala): _____

SAYINA: _____

APPENDIX 6 – INTERVIEWEE LIST

WOMEN N= 18

NAME (PSEUDONYM)	AGE	MARITAL STATUS	HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD	BUYING CLUB(S)	FUNERAL INSURANCE PLAN(S)	CHURCH MEMBERSHIP FEES	OTHER
Sondezwa	20s	Unmarried	No	2	1	0	Church transport
Lungiswa	40s	Unmarried	No	0	1	1	0
Thandiswa	30s	Unmarried	No	1	0	0	0
Melody	30s	Married	No	1	0	0	0
Precious	30s	Widow	Yes	0	0	0	0
Nozibele	30s	Unmarried	No	0	0	0	Church events
Nothozamile	40s	Married	No	0	0	0	0
Nolumanyano	50s	Widow	Yes	1	2	1	0
Nosebenezile	50s	Widow	Yes	0	2	1	Contributions to church building fund
Nozolile	50s	Separated	Yes	2	0	1	0
Nokhuselo	50s	Married	No	2	1	1	0
Nowethu	50s	Widow	Yes	3	2	1	0
Nothemba	50s	Widow	Yes	0	1	1	0
Nomzi	50s	Widow	Yes	1	1	1	0
Lilian	60s	Married	No	3	1	0	0
Nofundile	70s	Widow	Yes	0	1	0	Church transport
June	70s	Widow	No	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
MaDlamini	70s	Married	No	1	1	1	0

MEN N= 6

NAME (PSEUDONYM)	AGE	MARITAL STATUS	HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD	BUYING CLUB(S)	FUNERAL INSURANCE PLAN(S)	CHURCH MEMBERSHIP FEES	OTHER
Mr. Mkani	60s	Married	Yes	0	0	1	0
Mthunzi	40s	Married	Yes	0	n/a	0	0
Xola	50s	Widower	Yes	0	0	0	0
Mr. Sangwane	60s	Married	Yes	0	1	0	0
Max	60s	Married	Yes	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Lizo	50s	Married	Yes	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

APPENDIX 7 – INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

This is to state that I agree to participate in a program of research being conducted by **Vanessa Nicolai** of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology of Concordia University in Montreal, Canada (1455 de Maisonneuve W., LB-681, Montreal, Quebec, H3G 1M8. Phone: (514) 281-0459; E-mail: vnicolai@sympatico.ca).

A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is as follows: **To study the economic realities of Hamburg and the way they shape relationships within the community, with specific reference to funerals.**

B. PROCEDURES

The interviews will be conducted at the place of my choice. I will participate in 2 to 4 interviews, of approximately 60 minutes each. In the first, I will be asked about my sources of income and household expenditures. In the second, I will be asked about funerals in the community and/or in my family. The third will be focused on my life history. A fourth interview may be conducted for additional details or clarifications.

I am free to answer or not answer any of the questions asked by the researcher. If I accept to have the interviews tape-recorded, I understand that the cassette(s) will be destroyed after the material on it(them) has been transcribed. The researcher will change my name as well as any other information that could lead to my identification in all the materials (written documents, cassettes).

C. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time without negative consequences.
- I understand that my participation in this study is:
 - ☐ CONFIDENTIAL (i.e. the researcher will know, but will not disclose my identity)
 - ☐ NON-CONFIDENTIAL (i.e. my identity will be revealed in the study results)
- I understand that the data from this study will be used to complete a Master's thesis

I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

DATE: _____

NAME (please print): _____

SIGNATURE: _____

APPENDIX 8 – INTERVIEW GUIDES

FUNERAL INTERVIEW GUIDE IA¹²⁷

1. What was it that helped you the most during that time?
2. Who was in charge of organizing the funeral for ____?
3. Did you contact family members outside Hamburg to come to the funeral? Who came? Where did they come from?
4. What kind of arrangements did you make for dishes, cooking pots, utensils, etc.?
5. Who were the people who came to help with the preparations? What did they do?
6. How did you cover the cost of the funeral (insurance plans, contributions from family members, loans, credit)?
7. What were the biggest expenses you had to cover?
8. Did people bring money or gifts of food? Did you write down who brought what?
9. Can you tell me about the funeral day? (How many people came? Who were the speakers?)
10. Were you satisfied with the way the funeral went? Why or why not?
11. What do you think is important for a proper funeral?
12. How often do you go to funerals? Why do you go?
13. Do you take something for the family? Do you contribute in other ways?
14. Are you often asked to contribute money to relatives' funerals?
15. Have funerals changed since the time of your parents or grandparents? How?
16. What do you think of these changes?
17. When a person dies of HIV/AIDS, is it spoken about at the funeral?
18. What do you need to do in this community to have a good name?

¹²⁷ I always started these interviews by offering my condolences to the interviewee and asking about the person (or people) in their family he or she had lost.

FUNERAL INTERVIEW GUIDE IB

1. Which clubs (*imigalelo*) for funerals do you belong to?
2. How do the clubs work?
3. Are all of the members women? Why?
4. Can anyone join the clubs?
5. What do you do if someone doesn't pay?
6. Is it important for you to belong to a club? Why?
7. Do you belong to any clubs that are not related to funerals?
8. How do they work?
9. How do the women (*makotis*) organize themselves when they work at the house of a bereaved family?
10. What kind of work do they do?
11. Do they ever not go to someone's house? Why?
12. What do they talk about while they work?
13. Do you belong to a *manyano*?
14. Why is it important for you to belong to a *manyano*?
15. What role do the *manyano* groups play at funerals?

HISTORY OF HAMBURG INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. How long have you been living in Hamburg?
2. How was Hamburg in ____ (decade, period)? Do you have photos?
3. What kind of businesses were there?
4. What opportunities for employment did people have?
5. What do you remember of Hamburg during apartheid/the Ciskei years?
6. What kinds of changes have you noticed since 1994?
7. What do you think of life in Hamburg these days?

APPENDIX 9 – FUNERAL COSTS: PEDDIE/HAMBURG

ITEM	AVERAGE AMOUNT SPENT
Newspaper ad (R35 to R320/day)	R300
Radio announcement	Free
<i>Coffin</i> (minimum R900; maximum R14,000)	R1,500
Grave sign or cross (R70 to R360)	R120
<i>Mortuary</i> (R95 per weekday; R150 on weekends)	R1,100
<i>Hearse / hire car for coffin</i>	R500
<i>Tent</i>	R250
<i>Lamp for tent</i>	R150
<i>Lowering device for coffin</i>	R300
Programs	R200
Wreaths / flowers (between R15 and R450 each)	R200
Groceries for prayer meetings	R750
<i>Groceries for funeral</i>	R3,000
<i>Drinks</i>	R1,500
Ox	R3,000
Sheep	R500
Chicken pieces	R400
Paint (R20 for 20L), cleaning supplies	R100
Chairs (rented from Primary School)	R20
Electricity	R40
New clothes	R1,500
Mourning dress for widows	R320
Transport to Peddie and East London (round trip to Peddie costs R26; to East London, R45, plus extra for goods brought back).	R200
Local transportation of pots, chairs etc. by tractor and trailer or donkey-cart (R15 per load)	R100
TOTAL (without funeral insurance)	R16,050
TOTAL (with one funeral insurance plan)¹²⁸	R10,250

¹²⁸ All Peddie funeral insurance plans cover mortuary, hearse transportation and funeral service costs, along with a combination of groceries, drinks, coffin and other services. This is therefore a rough estimate obtained by subtracting the cost of the entries in italics (R2,000 for groceries and drinks).

APPENDIX 10 – SAMPLE OF FUNERAL PARLOURS IN PEDDIE (2005)

NAME	FOUNDED ¹	COVER	JOINING FEE	MONTHLY PREMIUM	WAITING PERIOD	NO. OF MEMBERS	EXCLUSIONS
Nontshinga	1985	R5,000 (covers coffin, mortuary and graveyard service, and R500 for groceries)	R40	R40+	6 months	1,000+	Suicide
Gwiliza's Funeral Home	2000	R5,000 (covers coffin, mortuary, graveyard service, tent)	R50	R35	6 months	1,000+	24-month waiting period for payouts in cases of suicide and HIV/AIDS.
Ekuphumleni	2004	R5,000 cash or full service, which includes one week of mortuary storage	R60	R50 to R70	6 months	N/A	N/A
Amagasela	1990	Coffin and groceries or 10 cases of drinks, mortuary storage, transport	R30 to R80 (depending on number of dependants)	Same as joining fee	3 months	N/A	N/A
Chitibunga	1999	R3,100 cash payout + coffin, mortuary and graveyard service, tent.	R70 to R150	R15 to R100	6 months	3,000	None
Royce and Rhodes	2003	See note below ²	R25 to R135	Same as joining fee	6 months	156	24-month waiting period for payouts in cases of suicide and HIV/AIDS. Excluded: death due to political uproar or natural disaster.

¹ This refers to the founding year of the Peddie branch; all of these funeral parlours have branches in other towns and cities across the region.

² This funeral home offers a variety of categories of coverage. The coverage for the three schemes in Category A (single persons, 14-59 years, with our without children) is as follows: R25/month: flat-lid coffin and flowers; headstone; programs; advertising and administration; mortuary service; graveyard services (lowering device, music, tent, chairs); R35/month: raised 2-tiered coffin and flowers; headstone frame and chips; advertising and admin.; mortuary services; graveyard services; R65/month: steel casket and flowers; headstone frame and slab; advertising and admin.; mortuary; graveyard services.

APPENDIX 11 – SAMPLE OF INFORMAL “BUYING CLUBS” IN HAMBURG

NAME	MEANING	PURPOSE	MEMBERSHIP	CONTRIBUTIONS
Thuso	“Help” (Zulu)	Groceries for funerals and other ceremonies	N/A	Depends on what people decide to bring (e.g. R50 or a big bag of beans, potatoes, etc.)
Masiphekisane	“Let us cook together”	Groceries for funerals	31 members (all women)	Groceries + R10 (e.g. 12,5 kg sugar = R65)
Rhuqa	“To drag”	Groceries for funerals (members “drag” or “bring along” a contribution).	16 members (all women)	N/A
Masakhane	“Let us build each other”	Liquor club used for parties or mortuary rituals like <i>utukhapa</i> and <i>utubuyisa</i> . (Two parties a year.)	31 members (2 men)	1 case beer (R69); 1 bottle of Viceroy (R60) + R10. In some instances, members contribute cases of brandy (R500 a case).
Isibane	“Lantern”	Neighbourhood collections for funerals	30 members (all women)	Each member pays in R20.
Masizame	“Let us try”	Groceries for funerals	N/A	N/A
Masitehwalisane	“Let us carry the burden together”	Groceries for funerals	N/A	N/A
Mas’needane	“Let us help each other”	Purchase of big gifts (e.g. furniture, appliances)	14 members (all women)	Each member contributes R200.
Lingelethu	“Our own effort”	Beverages for funerals	N/A	N/A
Nopotana	“Small pot”	Groceries for funerals	16 members (all women)	N/A
Siyazama	We are trying	Liquor for parties and mortuary rituals	19 members (all women)	Each member brings a case of beer (R54) and a bottle of brandy or gin (R52).
Unoncedo	We are helping each other	Beverages for funerals	30 members (all women)	Each member contributes 1 case of drinks (R52 each)
Secret Pal	--	Gifts for the home	12 members (all women)	Each member contributes R100.
Umqebo	“Sharing”	Money is invested and one of the members buys wholesale for the others.	5 members (all women)	R100 per year